

1918-2018 WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

# HISTORY *of* WAR



**WILFRED OWEN**  
THE FINAL TRAGIC DAYS

FINAL MARCH TO VICTORY ★ FORGOTTEN WAR ZONES ★ REAL VETERAN STORIES

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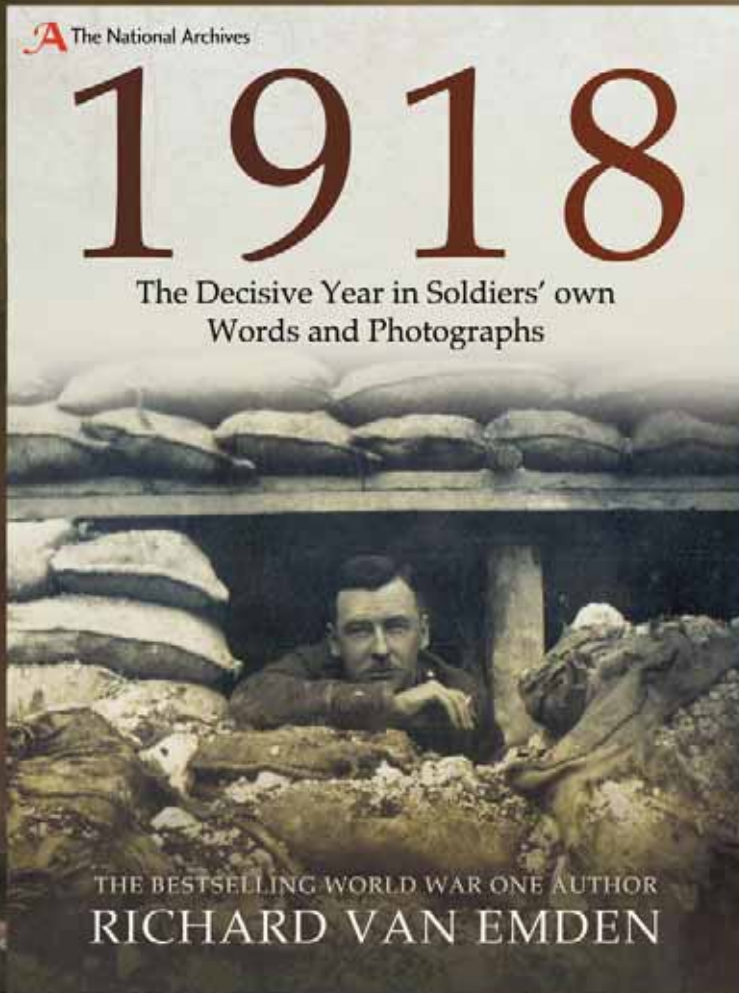
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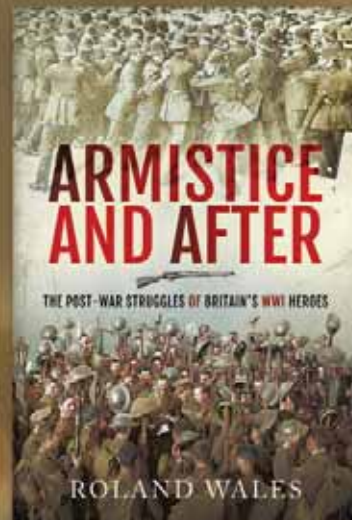
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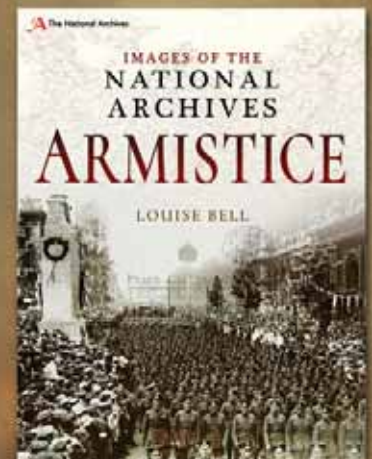
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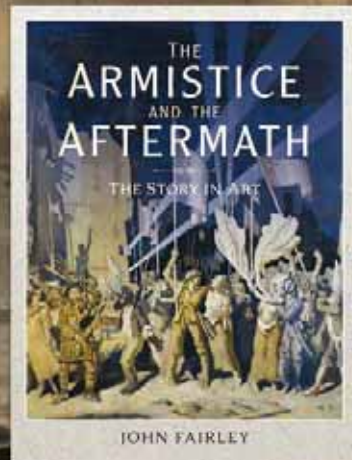
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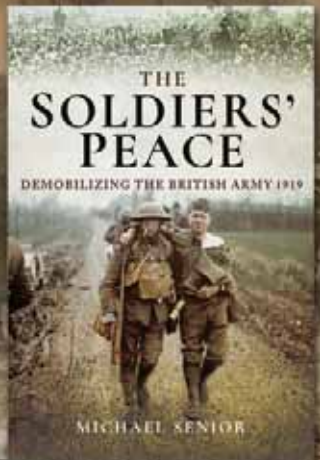
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# Welcome



Image: Getty

Marshal Ferdinand Foch salutes the British 'Unknown Warrior', on Armistice Day, 1920

**T**his November marks the final milestone of the centenary years of World War I. Over four years of warfare on a previously unthinkable scale had ended with the signing of the Armistice in the early hours, in a small train carriage, a century ago. It was peace at last, 'never again', 'the war to end all wars', and so on.

As Dr Jonathan Krause explains in this issue's cover feature, history is far more complex than this neat ending. In the aftermath of WWI, new regimes and states battled for dominance across the world. Far from a lasting peace, this

so-called 'inter-war' period – Foch's correctly predicted '20 years armistice' – resulted in yet more bloodshed and carnage.



**Tim Williamson**  
Editor

## CONTRIBUTORS

### TOM GARNER

This issue Tom spoke with Allan Wilmot, a Jamaican Royal Navy and RAF veteran who served in lifesaving missions off Britain's coast during WWII (p. 74). In the Frontline, he takes a look at the conquests of the Teutonic Order (p. 14).



### MARIANNA BUKOWSKI

In 1940, Captain Witold Pilecki, a soldier with the Polish resistance, offered to go on a reconnaissance mission into Auschwitz. This issue Marianna recounts Pilecki's incredible story and how he exposed the greatest horror of WWII (p. 44).



### MIGUEL MIRANDA

In 1942 the Japanese army was driving forward in its conquests in the Far East, with Allied strongholds in their sights. In this issue's Great Battles, Miguel recounts how US forces faced a shock defeat in the Fall of Bataan (p. 56).



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AFTERMATH



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The knights were led by remarkable soldiers and grand masters during their long history

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**42** Never miss an issue, get History Of War before it's available in the shops and save a bundle while you're at it

A black and white portrait of a young man with short hair, wearing a military uniform with a high collar and epaulettes. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a blurred street scene with a building that has a sign that says 'FREI'.

## INFILTRATING AUSCHWITZ

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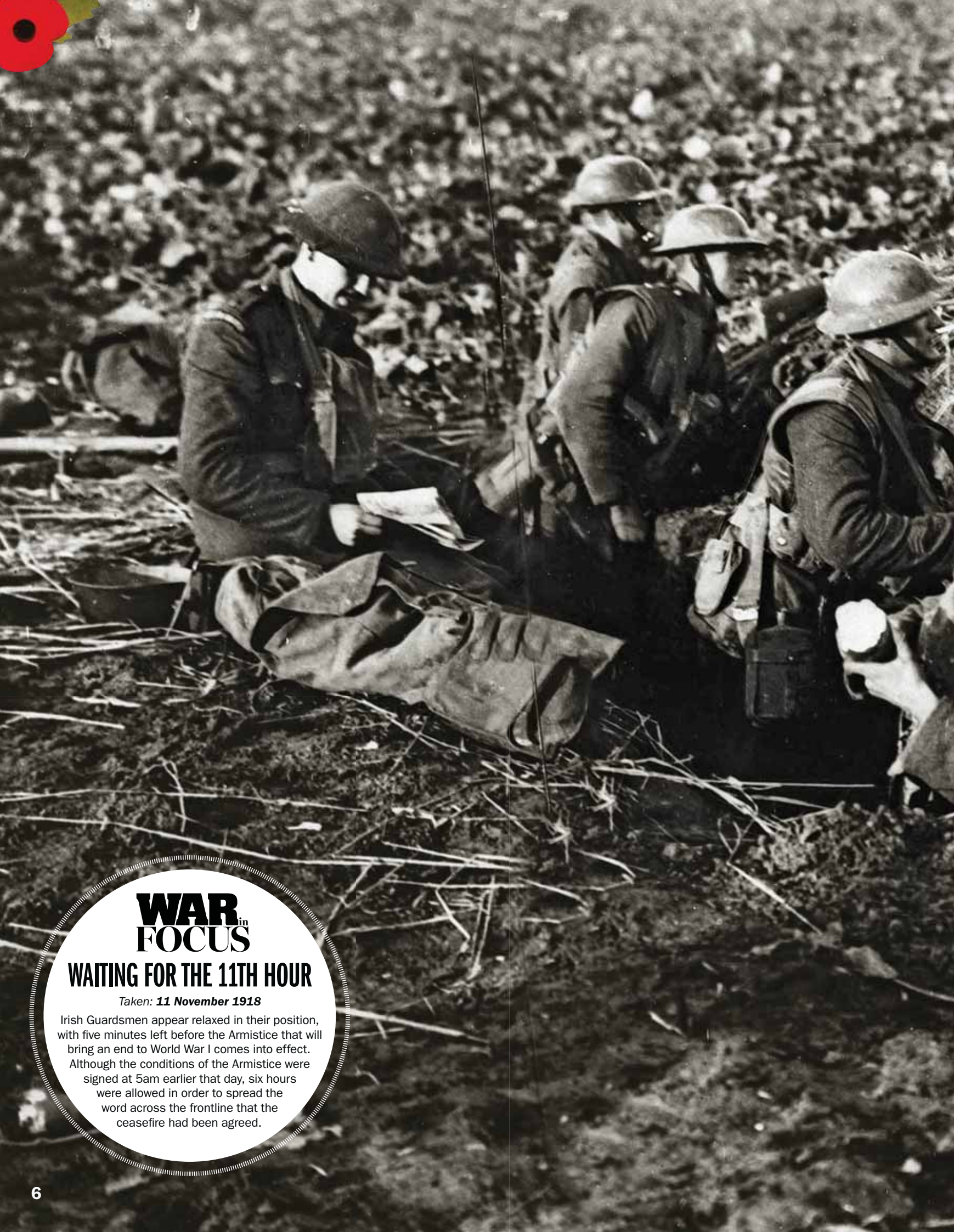
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## **WAR**<sub>in</sub> **FOCUS**

### **WAITING FOR THE 11TH HOUR**

*Taken: 11 November 1918*

Irish Guardsmen appear relaxed in their position, with five minutes left before the Armistice that will bring an end to World War I comes into effect.

Although the conditions of the Armistice were signed at 5am earlier that day, six hours were allowed in order to spread the word across the frontline that the ceasefire had been agreed.

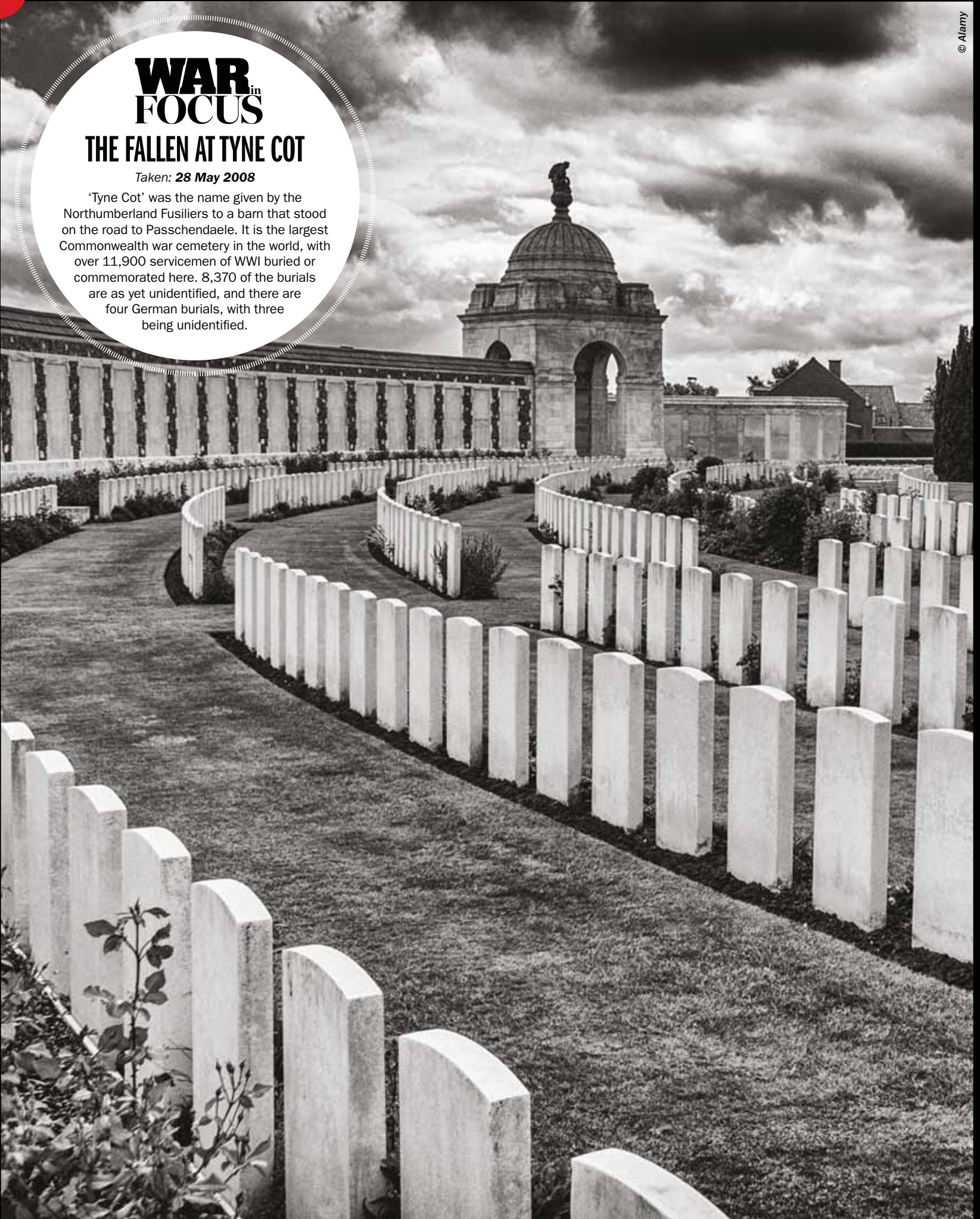


# WAR in FOCUS

## THE FALLEN AT TYNE COT

Taken: 28 May 2008

'Tyne Cot' was the name given by the Northumberland Fusiliers to a barn that stood on the road to Passchendaele. It is the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the world, with over 11,900 servicemen of WWI buried or commemorated here. 8,370 of the burials are as yet unidentified, and there are four German burials, with three being unidentified.



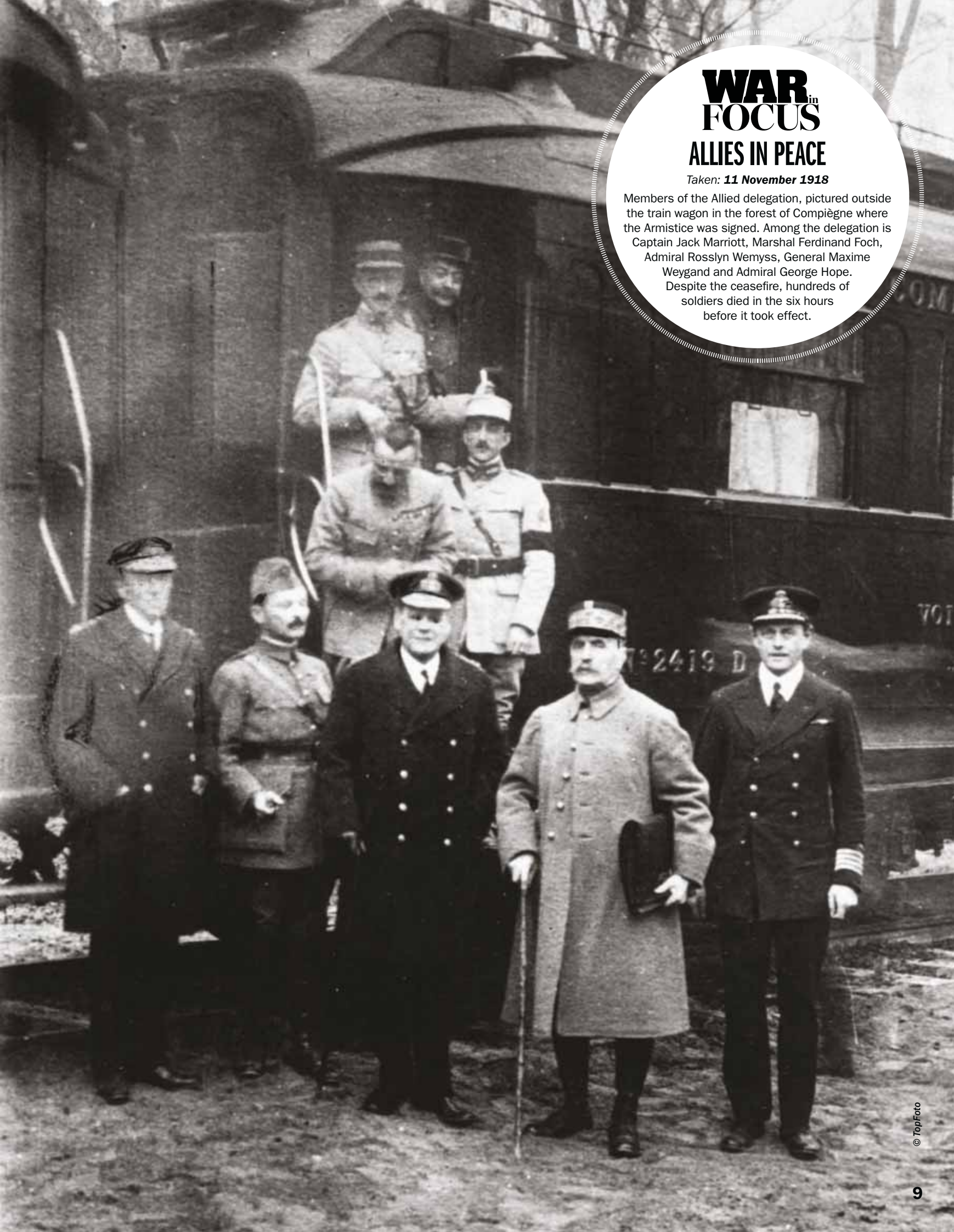


# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## ALLIES IN PEACE

Taken: **11 November 1918**

Members of the Allied delegation, pictured outside the train wagon in the forest of Compiègne where the Armistice was signed. Among the delegation is Captain Jack Marriott, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Admiral Rosslyn Wemyss, General Maxime Weygand and Admiral George Hope. Despite the ceasefire, hundreds of soldiers died in the six hours before it took effect.







**WAR**  
**in**  
**FOCUS**

**THE COMPIÈGNE WAGON**

*Taken: c. 1918*

A French tank stands by the Compiègne Wagon, on display at Les Invalides after the war. While the train car became a symbol of France's victory in the war, it also became a symbol of treachery and the centre of the 'stab-in-the-back' myth that later fuelled German nationalism. The same wagon was deliberately chosen by the Nazis as the scene of the 1940 Armistice.



# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## DOUGHBOYS CELEBRATE

*Taken: 11 November 1918*

Soldiers of the US Army Signal Corps celebrate the Armistice on the Western Front. At the point the United States declared war on Germany in 1917, the US Army numbered just over 127,000 men, but by the war's end 4 million soldiers had served. The American Expeditionary Force suffered approximately 360,000 casualties, of which 126,000 were killed in combat.







# TIMELINE OF THE... TEUTONIC ORDER

**BATTLE ON THE ICE**  
Teutonic attempts to convert Orthodox Christians of Novgorod to Catholicism dramatically fail. Prince Alexander Nevsky wins a famous battle against the knights in a frozen battle on Lake Peipus.

Founded in the Holy Land, this zealous military order established a Germanic crusader state in Eastern Europe to convert pagans and Orthodox Christians to Roman Catholicism

*Alexander Nevsky's victory against the Teutonic Order has become a celebrated event in Russian history*

5 April 1242

1190-98

## A CRUSADING ORDER

German knights establish a field hospital at the Siege of Acre during the Third Crusade, and Pope Innocent III officially sanctions them as the Teutonic Order in 1198.

*Pope Innocent III becomes infamous for his expansion of crusades in Europe, including against Muslims in Spain, Cathars in southern France and the campaign that leads to the sack of Constantinople*



1226-74

## PRUSSIAN CRUSADE

The order is invited by Polish princes to Christianise the pagan Prussians, who inhabit what are now the Baltic states. Teutonic knights quash several Prussian uprisings and eventually establish control of Prussia with the establishment of a monastic state.

*Radzyn Chełmński Castle is one of the oldest surviving Teutonic fortresses in Poland and was built during the Prussian Crusade*



1228-29

## SIXTH CRUSADE

The Teutonic Order supports Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor, when he invades Palestine. The crusaders manage to recapture Jerusalem through diplomatic means, and Teutonic knights escort Frederick for a political 'coronation' at Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

*Frederick II (second from left) enters Jerusalem to negotiate with Al-Kamil, Sultan of Egypt. To his left is a German bodyguard, who is possibly a Teutonic knight*





## BATTLE OF GRUNWALD

The Order suffers its greatest defeat at Grunwald against a Polish-Lithuanian army. The battle ends Teutonic expansion along the southeastern coast of the Baltic Sea and marks the beginning of its decline in power.



*Grunwald is one of the largest battles in medieval European history and is seen as a momentous clash between the Germanic and Slavic peoples*

## POLISH-TEUTONIC WAR

The Teutonic Order invades the Kingdom of Poland in 1431, but the Poles and their Czech Hussite allies repeatedly defeat them. The Polish victory against the Livonian Order at the Battle of Wilkomierz in 1435 is considered to be a second Grunwald.

*Polish knights of the early 15th century prove more than a match for the more famous Teutonic Order*



**“TEUTONIC ATTEMPTS TO CONVERT ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS OF NOVGOROD TO CATHOLICISM DRAMATICALLY FAIL”**

1283-1410

15 July 1410

1431-35

10 April 1525

## LITHUANIAN CRUSADE

The Teutonic and Livonian Orders launch a series of campaigns to convert the last European pagan state - the Grand Duchy of Lithuania - to Catholicism. The duchy eventually converts to Christianity in 1386.

*A 14th-century bas-relief in Malbork Castle depicts the Order fighting Lithuanians*



## PRUSSIAN HOMAGE

The crusader state of the Teutonic Order formally ends when the grand master of the Teutonic Knights is invested as duke of Prussia in fief to King Sigismund I of Poland.

*The establishment of the duchy of Prussia from the decline of the Teutonic Order is partially brokered by Martin Luther, which leads it to become the first Protestant state in history*

# KNIGHTS IN EASTERN EUROPE

The Order established a formidable crusader state that fought endless wars in Poland and the Baltic states, with varying degrees of success

## 1 BATTLE OF KRÜCKEN

29 NOVEMBER 1249 **KAMENKA, KALININGRAD OBLAST**

Marshal Heinrich BoteI leads Teutonic knights in pillaging the lands of the pagan Natangians (Prussians). The knights surrender after being surrounded at Krücken, but 54 are massacred in cold blood. The Teutonic Order never surrenders to pagans again.

**“THE KNIGHTS SURRENDER AFTER BEING SURROUNDED AT KRÜCKEN, BUT 54 ARE MASSACRED IN COLD BLOOD. THE TEUTONIC ORDER NEVER SURRENDERS TO PAGANS AGAIN”**

## 2 BATTLE OF DURBE

13 JULY 1260 **DURBE, LATVIA**

Outnumbered Samogitian Lithuanians defeat a combined force of knights from the Teutonic and Livonian Orders. 150 knights are killed, including the Livonian master, in one of the Order's largest defeats of the 13th century.

## 3 SIEGE OF KÖNIGSBERG

1262-65 **KALININGRAD, KALININGRAD OBLAST**

Pagan Prussians besiege the important Teutonic stronghold of Königsberg. At one point, Teutonic knights led by Grand Master Anno von Sangerhausen kill 3,000 Prussians in a relieving battle at Kalgen. The siege is eventually lifted.

Anno Von Sangerhausen, who served as grand master from 1256-1273, fought a battle at Kalgen to relieve Königsberg, although the siege later resumed

## 4 SIEGE OF BARTENSTEIN

1264 **BARTOSZYCE, WARMIAN-MASURIAN VOIVODESHIP, POLAND**

1,300 pagan Prussians in Barta besiege 400 Teutonic knights. The knights trick the Prussians into believing they have fled the castle. When the enemy gets close to castle's walls the knights attack, before successfully fleeing to safety.



The mass suicide in the wake of Teutonic aggression is recognised as a tragically heroic event in Lithuanian history

## 6 SIEGE OF PILENAI

25 FEBRUARY 1336 **PILENAI, LITHUANIA**

4,000 Lithuanians burn their property and commit mass suicide after a hill fort siege against a numerically superior Teutonic force. The destruction is a desperate attempt to deprive the Order of prisoners and loot.

## 7 BATTLE OF RUDAU

FEBRUARY 1370 **RUDAU, KÖNIGSBERG, KALININGRAD OBLAST**

The Teutonic Order wins a pitched battle against Lithuanians after Rudau Castle is burned. The scale and course of the engagement is unknown, but the clash is the last serious threat from the Lithuanians during the 14th century.

## BATTLE ON THE ICE

5 APRIL 1242

LAKE PEIPUS, ESTONIA-RUSSIA

## BATTLE OF THE SIRITSA RIVER

27 AUGUST 1501

IZBORSK, PSKOV OBLAST, RUSSIA



**5 BATTLE OF PŁOWCE**  
 27 SEPTEMBER 1331 PŁOWCE, KUYAVIAN-POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP, POLAND

Władysław I, King of Poland fights the future Grand Master Dietrich von Altenburg near the blockaded town of Płowce. In a long, hard-fought battle, the Poles fail to destroy the Teutonic Order, but they win a victory that raises the kingdom's military stature.

Teutonic forces suffer twice as many casualties than the Poles at Płowce



**TEUTONIC TAKEOVER OF DANZIG**  
 13 NOVEMBER 1308 GDANSK, POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP, POLAND

**GOLLUB WAR**  
 17 JULY-27 SEPTEMBER 1422 CHEŁMNO LAND, POLAND

**BATTLE OF PYZDRY**  
 27 JULY 1331 PYZDRY, GREATER POLAND VOIVODESHIP, POLAND

**BATTLE OF PAGASTIN**  
 1271 DZIERZGON, POLAND

**BATTLE OF LUBAWA**  
 1263 LUBAWA, WARMIAN-MASURIAN VOIVODESHIP, POLAND

**SIERGE OF ALLENSTEIN**  
 JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1521 OLSZTYN, WARMIAN-MASURIAN VOIVODESHIP, POLAND

**1ST SIEGE OF MARIENBURG**  
 26 JULY-19 SEPTEMBER 1410 MALBORK, POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP, POLAND

**2ND SIEGE OF MARIENBURG**  
 FEBRUARY-SEPTEMBER 1454

**3RD SIEGE OF MARIENBURG**  
 28 SEPTEMBER 1457-5 AUGUST 1460

**BATTLE OF POKARWIS**  
 22 JANUARY 1261 USHAKOVO, KALININGRAD OBLAST

**BATTLE OF MEDININKAI**  
 27 JULY 1320 VARNIAI, TELŠIAI COUNTY, LITHUANIA

**SIERGE OF CHRISTMEMEL**  
 1315 SKIRSNEMUNE, TAURAGE COUNTY, LITHUANIA

**SIERGE OF KAUNAS**  
 13 MARCH-17 APRIL 1362 KAUNAS, LITHUANIA

**BATTLE OF WILKOMIERZ**  
 1 SEPTEMBER 1435 PABAISKAS, VILNIUS COUNTY, LITHUANIA



Left: The Teutonic cavalry initially fight well at Grunwald, but they are eventually forced into a defensive position before many are killed or captured



Above: Now known as Malbork Castle, the Teutonic Order built Marienburg in the 13th century. This gigantic Ordensburg fortress is the largest castle in the world by land area

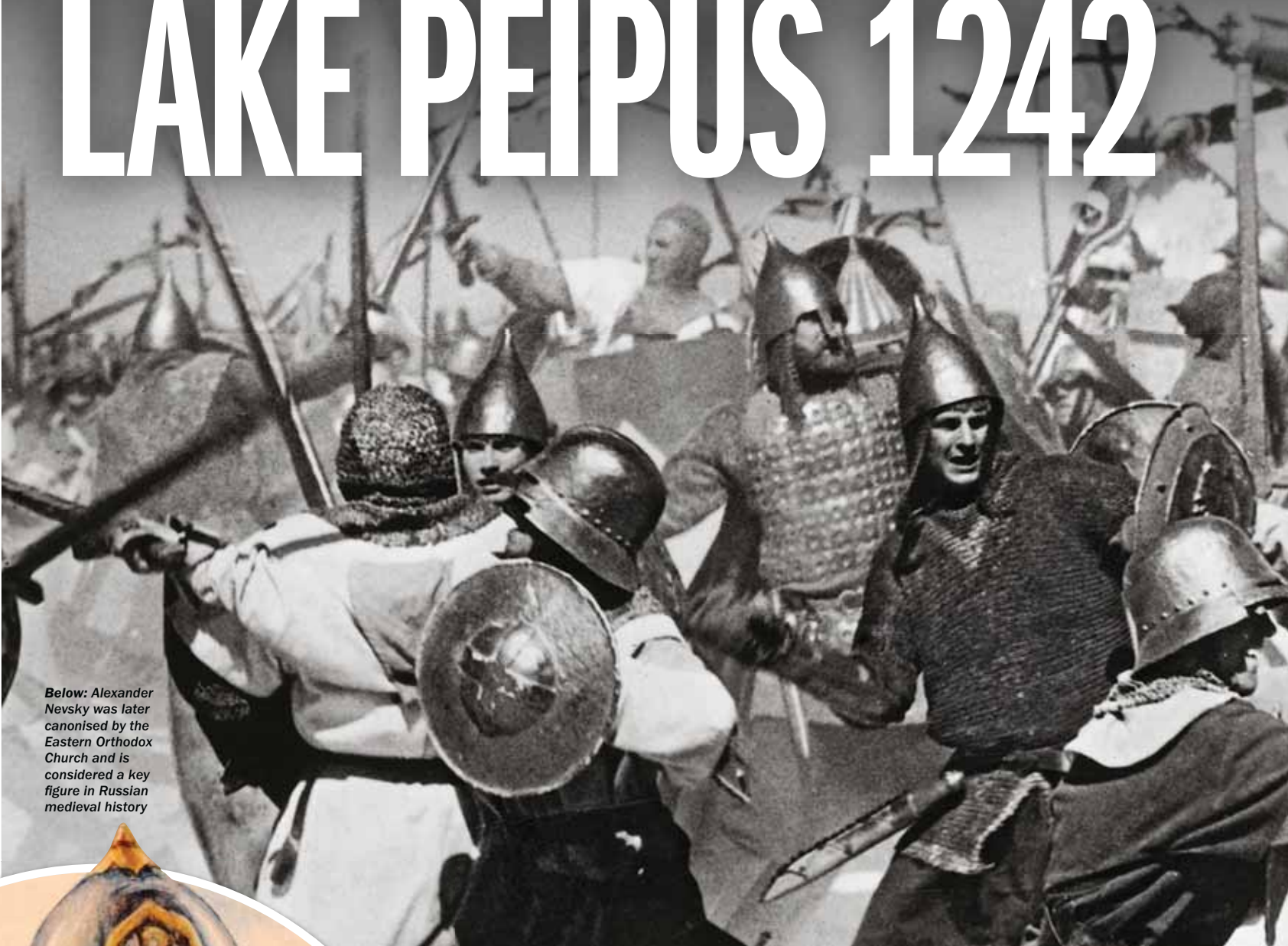
**8 BATTLE OF GRUNWALD**  
 15 JULY 1410 GRUNWALD, POLAND

Poland-Lithuania emerges as a formidable state after inflicting the worst defeat on the Teutonic Order in its history. The Order's grand master is killed and hundreds of Teutonic knights die, along with thousands of their troops.

Images: Getty

FAMOUS BATTLE

# LAKE PEIPUS 1242



*Below: Alexander Nevsky was later canonised by the Eastern Orthodox Church and is considered a key figure in Russian medieval history*



Better known as the ‘Battle on the Ice’, this legendary defeat of the Teutonic Livonian Order became a celebrated event in Russian history

**D**uring the 13th century, medieval Russia was a myriad of republics and principalities that were vulnerable to Mongol or European invasions. One of the most attacked was the Republic of Novgorod, which was predominantly inhabited by Orthodox Christians.

The citizens of the city of Novgorod had the unusually advanced democratic right to elect a prince. This leader, who was usually chosen from outside the republic, acted as a military commander, and in 1236 the citizens elected Prince Alexander of Vladimir.

In 1240, Sweden invaded Novgorod but Alexander defeated them at the Battle of the Neva. This victory earned him the sobriquet of ‘Nevsky’ (meaning ‘of the Neva’) and the prince would be known afterwards as ‘Alexander Nevsky’. The victory at Neva enhanced Alexander’s reputation, but he intervened in domestic affairs and was temporarily exiled.

Meanwhile, the Teutonic Order was making great efforts to ‘Christianise’ the Baltic region, particularly during the Prussian Crusade. A Teutonic crusader state had been carved out in Eastern Europe, and the Order’s ambitions turned to Russia, with papal backing. Although the Novgorodians were Eastern Orthodox

A scene from Sergei Eisenstein's 1938 film 'Alexander Nevsky'. The famous depiction of the Battle on the Ice was actually filmed during a hot summer outside Moscow



Christians, they were considered to be heretical pagans. The Order's mission to convert Novgorod to Roman Catholicism would turn the coming conflict into a theological struggle.

In 1240, Teutonic knights attacked the lands of the Republic of Novgorod and occupied Pskov, Izborsk and Koporye. These Germanic warriors were actually members of the Livonian Order, an autonomous branch of the Teutonic knights that had recently been incorporated

**“ALEXANDER POSITIONED HIMSELF ON THE LAKESIDE SHORE SO THAT HE COULD FACE THE ENEMY WHILE THEY STUMBLER ACROSS THE ICE”**

into the larger Order following its defeat against pagans at the Battle of Saule in 1236.

The capture of Pskov had been brutal, and the Novgorodians feared for their survival. Alexander was subsequently invited to return and defend the republic. After assembling a loose army of Russians from different territories, Alexander drove the Teutonic Livonians out of Koporye in 1241 and entered what is now Estonia. He then turned east and liberated Pskov, before once again moving towards the west to force the crusaders into a premature battle.

### A frozen battle

At this time, the number of Teutonic Livonians was small, with only 100 knights (along with their retainers) who were 'Brethren' of the Order. 800 other mounted knights were contracted warriors, and they were reinforced by formations of hundreds of Danish and German infantrymen as well as around 1,000 Estonian and Swedish mercenaries. All of the German troops were well trained, but many of the other soldiers in the Teutonic army were rampaging levies.

To oppose this force, Alexander had the numerical advantage of thousands more men and chose the battleground on a narrow, southern part of Lake Peipus. Although it was now April, the lake was still frozen with ice thick enough for infantry and light cavalry to cross. Alexander positioned himself on the lakeside shore so that he could face the enemy while they stumbled across the ice. For their part, the Teutonic army planned to attack as a formidable 'wedge' in order to break up Alexander's divisions.

On 5 April 1242, the mounted Teutonic wedge attacked across the lake with the aim of killing Alexander. Although it was a simple plan, both sides knew that the disparate Russian divisions would collapse without his presence. The knights initially forced the Russian centre back, but their line did not collapse. Alexander's horse archers skilfully attacked the Danish crusaders, who were unable to inflict great damage on their attackers. Faced with volleys of arrows, the Danes and Estonians in the Teutonic army fled, which enabled Alexander's force to outflank the rest of the crusaders.

The Teutonic charge across the ice had been disordered, and the Russians began to pull cavalymen off their horses as they stumbled along the slippery shore. As the knights became more exhausted, Alexander released his own druzhina cavalry, who slammed into their ranks. The crusaders were surrounded and forced back to the shoreline, where they broke and fled.

Only 50 crusader prisoners were captured compared to 400 who were killed, including 20 of the Brethren. The bloodiness of the battle was emphasised by the fact that only six of the Brethren were captured, despite ransoms for valuable prisoners being highly prized during this time.

Alexander became a legendary hero who was later canonised as an Orthodox saint, while the Livonians "sent expressions of deference" to Novgorod and concluded a peace treaty with them a year later. In a humiliating concession, the Order renounced its plans to conquer the republic and permanently halted its expansion into Russia.

## 'ALEXANDER NEVSKY'

**THE BATTLE ON THE ICE WAS FAMOUSLY IMMORTALISED AS SOVIET PROPAGANDA IN THE INFLUENTIAL SERGEI EISENSTEIN FILM**

The Battle on the Ice was historically decisive because it established a permanent border between the Narva River and Lake Peipus that divided Eastern Orthodoxy from Roman Catholicism. This theological division became political centuries later when the battle was immortalised in Sergei Eisenstein's epic film *Alexander Nevsky*.

Released in 1938, the film was produced during the Stalinist era and was clearly intended as Russian propaganda. In the year it was made, Germany was expanding eastwards and parallels were drawn between the Nazis and Teutonic knights as aggressive invaders. Nazi symbols were evident, with a Teutonic bishop wearing a mitre adorned with swastikas and infantrymen wearing helmets that resembled WWI stahlhelms. The dehumanisation of the Germanic warriors was emphasised with scenes that showed atrocities against Russian civilians.

The most famous moment was a dramatic 30-minute reconstruction of the Battle on the Ice, and Alexander was portrayed as a folk hero. The film's ultimate aim was to depict the medieval victory as a triumph of the 'collective' Russian people against the hierarchal 'bourgeois' nobles of the Order.

Ironically, although the film was extremely popular when it was released in Russia, it was temporarily removed from circulation when the USSR signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Germany in 1939. It was then dramatically reinstated following the commencement Operation Barbarossa in 1941 when the film was re-shown in Soviet and even Western cinemas.

A French poster for 'Alexander Nevsky'. The film turned Alexander into a Soviet icon against Nazi aggression during World War II



# DID GRUNWALD DOOM

The Order recovered admirably from its terrible defeat at Grunwald but could not halt its slow decline in the decades that followed

**H**istory has largely held that the Teutonic Order was dealt a fatal blow at Grunwald in 1410. Its defeat, however, was followed by more than a century of decline, culminating in the transformation of Prussia into a secular state, so the truth is a bit more complex.

The view that Grunwald spelled the end of the Order tends to overlook the surprising resilience of the knights in the wake of their defeat, which was without doubt grievous. Some 200 knights and thousands of infantrymen had perished in the battle. Much of the subsequent staying power of the knights was due to the efforts of Heinrich von Plauen, who would soon become the new grand master

of the Order. Von Plauen managed, in the months following the battle, something that would have seemed impossible in the days that came right after it – saving both the great fortress-city of Marienburg and expelling the Order's enemies from its overrun lands.

Von Plauen and the knights were aided in their resistance by the ineffective follow-up after Grunwald of the Poles and Lithuanians. The allies waited for two days before they set out for Marienburg and took several days to cover the mere 95 kilometres (60 miles) to the fortress. Von Plauen took good advantage of the time granted to him and made his way to Marienburg with a substantial number of troops to reinforce the garrison. He then secured a massive loan to hire mercenaries and was

also able to smuggle money out of Marienburg and through the porous allied siege lines to purchase the services of additional sellswords.

The overconfident King Władysław Jagiełło of Poland had also neglected to bring his siege artillery with him to use against Marienburg's walls, so his troops were forced to rely on catapults and guns scrounged from local castles. The longer von Plauen held out, the harder it became for the Order's enemies to maintain the siege, which was given up after 57 days, lasting between July and September 1410.

So the Order survived. What followed was much more harmful, over the long-term, and the Order would see a steady erosion of its power. The First Peace of Thorn in 1411 provided for a gargantuan indemnity to be paid by the



The Teutonic Knights clash with their Polish and Lithuanian enemies at Grunwald, 15 July 1410

# THE TEUTONIC ORDER?

Order, which emptied its treasury. Crushing taxes had to be levied, and the burden of these impositions grew ever heavier as the years passed. Unbearable taxation was bad for the prosperity of the country and turned the common people against the Order.

Money was at the root of the many troubles that would beset the Order in the years and decades after Grunwald. Money was needed to pay the soldiers of fortune who had become increasingly necessary for the defence of Prussia. Paid soldiers were becoming more crucial to the armies of the late Middle Ages and no prince could do without them. Mercenaries came with the necessary martial skills but also

their own demands: they were willing to fight, but only when paid. This meant that money to compensate them had to be collected via taxation. There were not enough knights for the Order to do without such hired soldiers.

Much of the underlying problem in this regard was demographic. The population of Europe had not fully rebounded from the hammer blow of the Black Death in the previous century, and there were few younger sons of the lesser nobility interested in taking up a life of service with a military order such as the Teutonic Knights. The Order's sinking fortunes damaged its prestige, and this reduced its ability to lure worthy recruits into its ranks. This only made it

more dependent on mercenaries and made the drain on their finances ever greater, which in turn necessitated heavier taxes.

The ideal of crusading had also begun to fail the Teutonic Order. In centuries past, it could expect a relatively steady stream of knights from Germany and elsewhere in Europe to come to fight the pagans. By the 15th century, however, the kings of Poland and Lithuania were both Christian, and the notion of crusading against them could not be seriously supported with a straight face.

The trend over the 15th century for the Order was irreversibly down, and there was little that the knights could do to stop it. The world was changing around them. The days of military-religious orders such as the Teutonic Knights were on the wane, and with the coming of the Reformation, Prussia would become a secular state that was Lutheran in faith.

**“UNBEARABLE TAXATION WAS BAD FOR THE PROSPERITY OF THE COUNTRY AND TURNED THE COMMON PEOPLE AGAINST THE KNIGHTS”**



# ORGANISATION & TACTICS

13th-century Eastern Europe was the battleground for a number of highly skilled warriors of differing backgrounds and equipment

**D**rawn from diverse cultures, the mounted warriors of the Teutonic Order, the Mongols, the Russian druzhina and the Cumans fought in their native styles against each other and other opponents. The Mongols and Cumans relied mainly on archery and mobility, while the Teutonic Knights and druzhina were primarily heavy armoured cavalry.



Left: A depiction of Mongol armour in the 14th century. Heavily armoured Mongol cavalry compelled enemy forces to stay close together, making them easy targets for the Mongol horse archers

## MONGOL WARRIOR

THE MONGOLS ERUPTED FROM ASIA IN THE EARLY 13TH CENTURY AND CRUSHED THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS AT THE BATTLE OF LIEGNITZ IN 1241

The Mongol warrior was a superb horseman, skilled at using the tactic of 'feigned flight' to draw an incautious enemy out of position to his doom. Most Mongols were swift-riding horse archers, equipped with composite bows of great hitting power and range. A smaller number of Mongols were heavy armoured cavalry armed with lances and spears. Their presence compelled an enemy to stay bunched together, making them easy targets for the more numerous horse archers. When the enemy had been softened up sufficiently, the armoured cavalry delivered a decisive charge.



## KNIGHT

WELL-TRAINED, WELL-ARMED AND DISCIPLINED, THE TEUTONIC KNIGHT WAS A VERY FORMIDABLE WARRIOR

The brother-knight of the Teutonic Order was a consummate professional warrior possessing enormous martial skill and unshakeable discipline. Upon joining the Order, a knight had to swear to obey the Order's rule, renounce property and pledge his chastity. A Teutonic knight was very much a 'warrior monk' of immense religious dedication and a devoted crusader. The knight's training as an armoured cavalryman served him in good stead against the Order's enemies.

His equipment was excellent. In the 13th century, the Teutonic knight's primary weapon was a two-edged sword. He also carried a lance for use in the charge. The typical knight was equipped with mail that covered the entirety of his body. Over this was worn a white linen surcoat bearing a black cross. His armour was often reinforced with a coat of plates. On his head he wore a fully enclosing great helm that granted excellent protection. Additional defence was provided by a triangular wooden shield.

Left: Knights of the Teutonic Order were heavily armed and armoured, and were clad in a distinctive surcoat of white with a black cross

**“THE DRUZHINA WERE THE ELITE BODYGUARDS OF THE RUSSIAN PRINCES”**

**RUSSIAN DRUZHINA CAVALRYMAN**

**MEDIEVAL RUSSIA WAS DIVIDED INTO A NUMBER OF PRINCIPALITIES, AND EACH PRINCE MAINTAINED AN ELITE CORPS OF WARRIORS AROUND HIM KNOWN AS DRUZHINA**

The medieval Druzhina cavalryman of Orthodox Kievan Rus was a well-equipped and dedicated warrior. The druzhina were the elite bodyguards of the Russian princes. They were armed with swords, maces, lances and spears. For protection, these horsemen wore lamellar armour over mail coats, helmets and kite shields. Druzhina were also armed with bows.

*Left: A Russian horseman, bearing both close-quarters weapons and a bow and arrows, making these warriors flexible and deadly on the battlefield*



Images: Alamy, Getty



*Right: An image from the Radziwiłł Chronicle showing Russian horsemen attacking Cumans*

**CUMAN WARRIOR**

**ALSO KNOWN AS KIPCHAOS, THE CUMANS WERE A TURKIC PEOPLE THAT DOMINATED THE EURASIAN STEPPE BEFORE THE COMING OF THE MONGOLS**

The Cumans had extensive interactions with the Russians and allied with them to fight the Mongols at the disastrous Battle of the Kalka River in 1223. The Teutonic Order fought the Cumans in Hungary in the early 13th century. The typical Cuman was a horse warrior equipped in the Eurasian style with a composite bow, swords, sabres, lances, spears, javelins, helmets and shields. Cumans ordinarily wore lamellar armour over mail coats.

# LEADERS & COMMANDERS

The knights were led by many remarkable soldiers during their long history



**HERMANN VON SALZA 1165-1239 GERMANY**  
**THIS GRAND MASTER DIRECTED THE ENERGY OF THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS TOWARDS THE CRUSADES AGAINST THE PAGANS OF THE BALTIC**

After a catastrophe in Cilicia in which the majority of the Teutonic Knights were slain, in 1210 leadership of the Order fell to Hermann von Salza. As hochmeister, or grand master, von Salza oversaw a remarkable revival of the Order. He was an able diplomat who was able to win the affection of both the pope and the Holy Roman emperor.

In 1211, in response to an invitation from King Andrew II of Hungary, the Order moved a large portion of its forces to Hungary to defend against raids by the pagan Cumans. The knights provided security and recruited German settlers to the lands ceded to them by Andrew.

Andrew became worried by the Order's success, and he expelled them in 1225. The Teutonic Knights went next to Livonia where another crusading order, the Sword Brethren, was already active. Their primary opponents were the pagan Prussians who lived deep in swampy lands and practised human sacrifice.

Prussian raids were so ferocious that Duke Conrad of Masovia had given up the province of Chelmo. He asked the Teutonic Knights to take possession of Chelmo and also granted to them the title to any lands that the knights might seize. Von Salza was given the Golden Bull of Rimini, which gave him complete sovereignty over the lands held by the Order.

Von Salza died in 1239, having set the Teutonic Order firmly on its course of crusading in the Baltic lands of Europe.

*Hermann von Salza won sovereignty for the Order over the lands it held in northeastern Europe*

**HERMANN BALKE UNKNOWN-1239 GERMANY**  
**THIS AGGRESSIVE SOLDIER FOUGHT FIERCELY AGAINST THE PAGAN PRUSSAINS**

The Teutonic Order's early efforts in Prussia were ill-fated. In 1229 two of the Order's knights were sent there, where they constructed the castle of Vogelsang on the Vistula River. Not long after their arrival both were slain by the pagan Prussians.

Undeterred, in 1230 the Order sent Hermann Balke with 20 knights and 200 sergeants to hold the castle. Balke was not content to sit on the defensive, but was an energetic crusader. In 1231 he led an attack on Prussian lands beyond the Vistula and captured a Prussian fortress-temple. He hanged the pagans' chief from their sacred oak.

Using frozen rivers as highways to penetrate deep into enemy territory, Balke and his followers hammered the Prussians, storming their forts and crushing resisting tribesmen. He was hugely successful.

In 1237, Balke departed Prussia and took up the post of landmeister of nearby Livonia. Though never grand master of the Order, Balke's achievement was considerable. He died in 1239, having helped to win a 240-kilometre (150-mile) stretch of coastline on the Baltic for the Order.

*Hermann Balke was an implacable foe of the pagan Prussians and crusaded against them without pause*





**ULRICH VON JUNGINGEN****1360-1410 GERMANY****THIS BELLIGERENT LEADER LED THE KNIGHTS TO DISASTER AT GRUNWALD**

Elected grand master of the Teutonic Order in 1407, von Jungingen presided over the calamitous defeat of the Order at the Battle of Grunwald in 1410. His own blood brother, Conrad, the previous grand master, had himself warned against making Ulrich leader of the Order, believing that Ulrich would bring about a catastrophe because of his towering hatred of the Poles.

Von Jungingen's demand that Poland and Lithuania stop their support of Samogitian rebels only brought about a desire for war among all parties. The grand master's opinion of the Lithuanians was low too, seeing them as unreliable traitors. Peace talks between the Order, the Poles and the Lithuanians came to nothing, and von Jungingen gathered his forces. The Teutonic Order met the Polish-Lithuanian army under King Władysław Jagiełło of Poland at Grunwald on 15 July 1410 and were slaughtered, losing approximately half their strength that day. Von Jungingen was himself slain in the fighting.

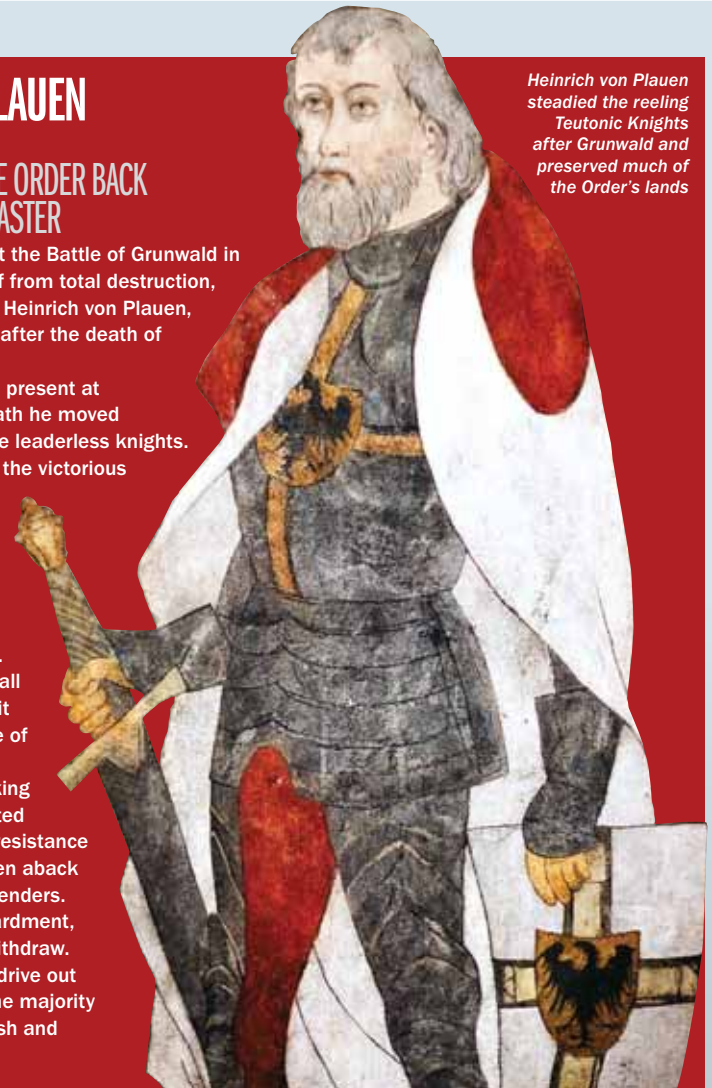
*Ulrich von Jungingen met his end at Grunwald, falling in the battle*

**HEINRICH VON PLAUIEN****1370-1429 GERMANY****THIS LEADER PULLED THE ORDER BACK FROM THE BRINK OF DISASTER**

Despite its terrible defeat at the Battle of Grunwald in 1410, the Order saved itself from total destruction, largely due to the efforts of Heinrich von Plauen, who became grand master after the death of von Jungingen in the battle.

Von Plauen had not been present at Grunwald, but in its aftermath he moved quickly to take charge of the leaderless knights. He would give no ground to the victorious Poles and Lithuanians, and shored up the Order's possessions against imminent assault. The city of Marienburg was strongly held and well-provisioned against a siege. Von Plauen also put out a call for reinforcements. His spirit helped to stiffen the morale of the forces in the city.

Władysław Jagiełło, the king of Poland, had not anticipated encountering such serious resistance at Marienburg and was taken aback by the fierceness of the defenders. After eight weeks of bombardment, Władysław was forced to withdraw. Von Plauen would go on to drive out the enemy and recapture the majority of castles taken by the Polish and Lithuanian forces.



*Heinrich von Plauen steadied the reeling Teutonic Knights after Grunwald and preserved much of the Order's lands*

**ALBRECHT VON HOHENZOLLERN** 1490-1568 GERMANY**THE LAST OF THE TEUTONIC ORDER'S GRAND MASTERS, ALBRECHT CONVERTED TO LUTHERANISM AND ESTABLISHED THE DUCHY OF PRUSSIA**

Albrecht von Hohenzollern was elevated to grand master of the Teutonic Order in 1511, just a few short years before Lutheranism would sweep across Germany, transforming the region forever. Albrecht himself allowed Lutherans to preach in his court in Königsberg. Lutheran reforms soon followed, with worship services being conducted in German, not Latin, and various Catholic practices, such as the veneration of saints, curtailed. Church properties were seized and sold. He would be the last of the grand masters of the Teutonic Order.

In 1525, as duke of Prussia, he swore allegiance to the king of Poland, bringing about peace with that realm. Albrecht himself renounced his vow of celibacy and married a woman named Dorothea, a princess of Denmark, in 1526. Prussia became thoroughly Lutheran.

Albrecht took a leading role in putting down a large-scale peasant uprising in 1525. This had been occasioned by free

farmers' fears that they would be turned into serfs. Similar insurrections were occurring all across Germany at this time. Albrecht now ruled Prussia – a small land that would play an outsized role in European politics in centuries to come – until 1568.

*Right: Albrecht was the last grand master of the Teutonic Knights and the first secular ruler of the Duchy of Prussia*



# WAR

## THE AFTERMATH

WORDS DR JONATHAN KRAUSE

At the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month in 1918 the guns fell silent across the Western Front, and World War I was officially over – however, far from ending all wars, many overlooked conflicts continued to rage across the globe

**D**own through the generations, the familiar story told of the Great War is retold time and time again. Unfortunately, the neat, happy ending of World War I was anything but for people all over the world. Across Eastern Europe and the Middle East fighting continued, on and off, well into the 1920s, as actors on the ground sought to either enforce the political agreements made at the end of the war, or to overturn or influence decisions they felt were unfavourable to them. Here, we look at a handful of conflicts in the post-war period, reminding us that the end of one war too often simply sets the scene for the next one.

When WWI ended, the armed forces of most belligerent countries were still scattered all over Europe and in parts of the Middle East and Africa. Many of the German armies that had been left strewn across Eastern Europe and western Russia simply chose not to head home, but instead operated as independent armies pursuing their own political objectives. The West Russian Volunteer Army was one such unit. Nominally allowed to remain in the Baltic after the war to carry on the fight against the Bolsheviks in Russia, this force chose to largely ignore this mandate and instead charted a more independent path.

Commanded officially by General Pavel Bermond-Avalov, a Cossack from Tiflis

**“THE NEAT, HAPPY ENDING OF WORLD WAR I WAS ANYTHING BUT FOR PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD”**

in Georgia, the West Russian Volunteer Army launched a campaign to secure an independent state or fiefdom of its own, briefly announcing the creation of a new West Russian state based in Riga, Latvia, and printing its own currency. The army quickly won fame after its initial successes in the Baltic and was frequently referred to simply as ‘the Bermontians’ in honour of their warlord-like

# STILL LIFE



commander. The West Russian Volunteer Army did not last long, however. After successfully invading Latvia and occupying at least part of Riga, it was defeated and driven back, with the support both of British warships firing from Riga's harbour and reinforcements from Lithuania and Estonia aiding the Latvians.

However, there is more to this brief campaign than is at first obvious. Instead of an independent army of people from western Russia, as it presented itself, the West Russian Volunteer Army was in reality 80 per cent German (roughly 40,000 Germans to 10,000 Russians and others). Its real commander was not even Bermond-Avalov, but was instead the German General Rüdiger von der Goltz, a

relative of the famous Colmar von der Goltz who had spent much of his professional life working with and training the Ottoman army, before dying of typhus in Baghdad in 1916. The much younger Rüdiger von der Goltz had been covertly tasked with securing a German foothold in the Baltic, and if possible reasserting German control over the newly independent Baltic states.

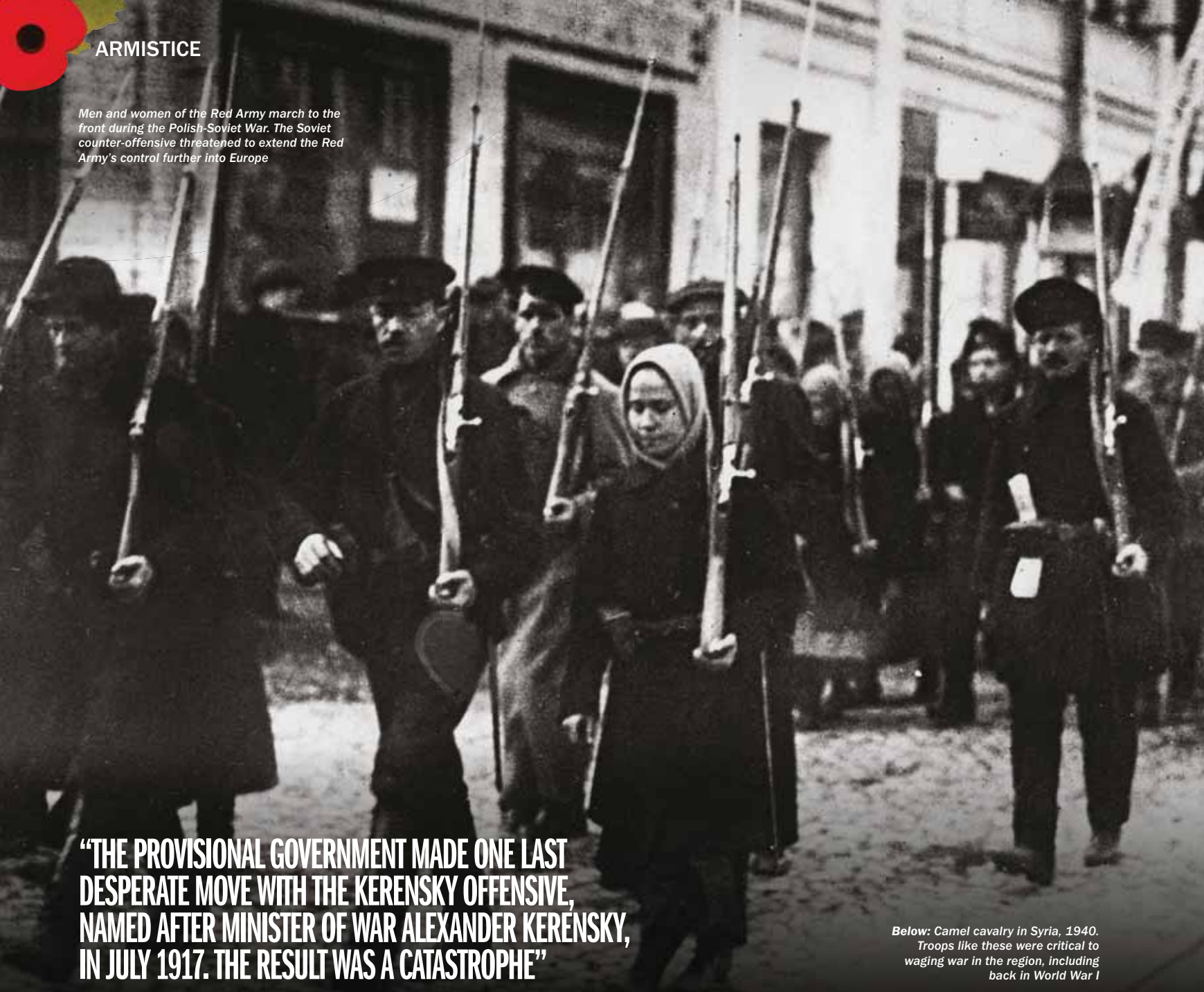
**“THE WEST RUSSIAN VOLUNTEER ARMY WAS IN REALITY 80 PER CENT GERMAN”**

Ultimately he failed and was compelled to withdraw back to Germany, along with the other Freikorps, many of whom found themselves fighting in German streets in an undeclared civil war into the early 1920s. Von der Goltz was just one of a large number of actors scrambling for power, influence, and even state-building, in the chaos that engulfed Eastern Europe in the aftermath of World War I.

### **The brutal birth of the USSR**

When discussing conflicts that persist after World War I you have to start with the largest and probably the most influential of them all: the Russian Civil War. The start of the story is universally well known, but is far too often

Men and women of the Red Army march to the front during the Polish-Soviet War. The Soviet counter-offensive threatened to extend the Red Army's control further into Europe



**“THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT MADE ONE LAST DESPERATE MOVE WITH THE KERENSKY OFFENSIVE, NAMED AFTER MINISTER OF WAR ALEXANDER KERENSKY, IN JULY 1917. THE RESULT WAS A CATASTROPHE”**

*Below: Camel cavalry in Syria, 1940. Troops like these were critical to waging war in the region, including back in World War I*

not told to completion. In March 1917 the February Revolution dethroned the Romanovs, and in their place was installed a Provisional Government. This continued to fight the war, despite a crumbling army infrastructure and a severely compromised command structure. The Provisional Government made one last desperate move with the Kerensky Offensive, named after Minister of War Alexander Kerensky, in July 1917. The result was a complete catastrophe.

Despite the offensive being led by General Aleksei Brusilov, who had won important successes in 1916 in Galicia, the old Russian army simply could no longer function as a fighting force. The disastrous effects of General Order No. 1 (which took power, and even weapons, out of the hands of officers and put it in the hands of soldier collectives), along with the huge blow to morale that came with political chaos and uncertainty, had paralysed the Russian army and critically reduced its efficacy.

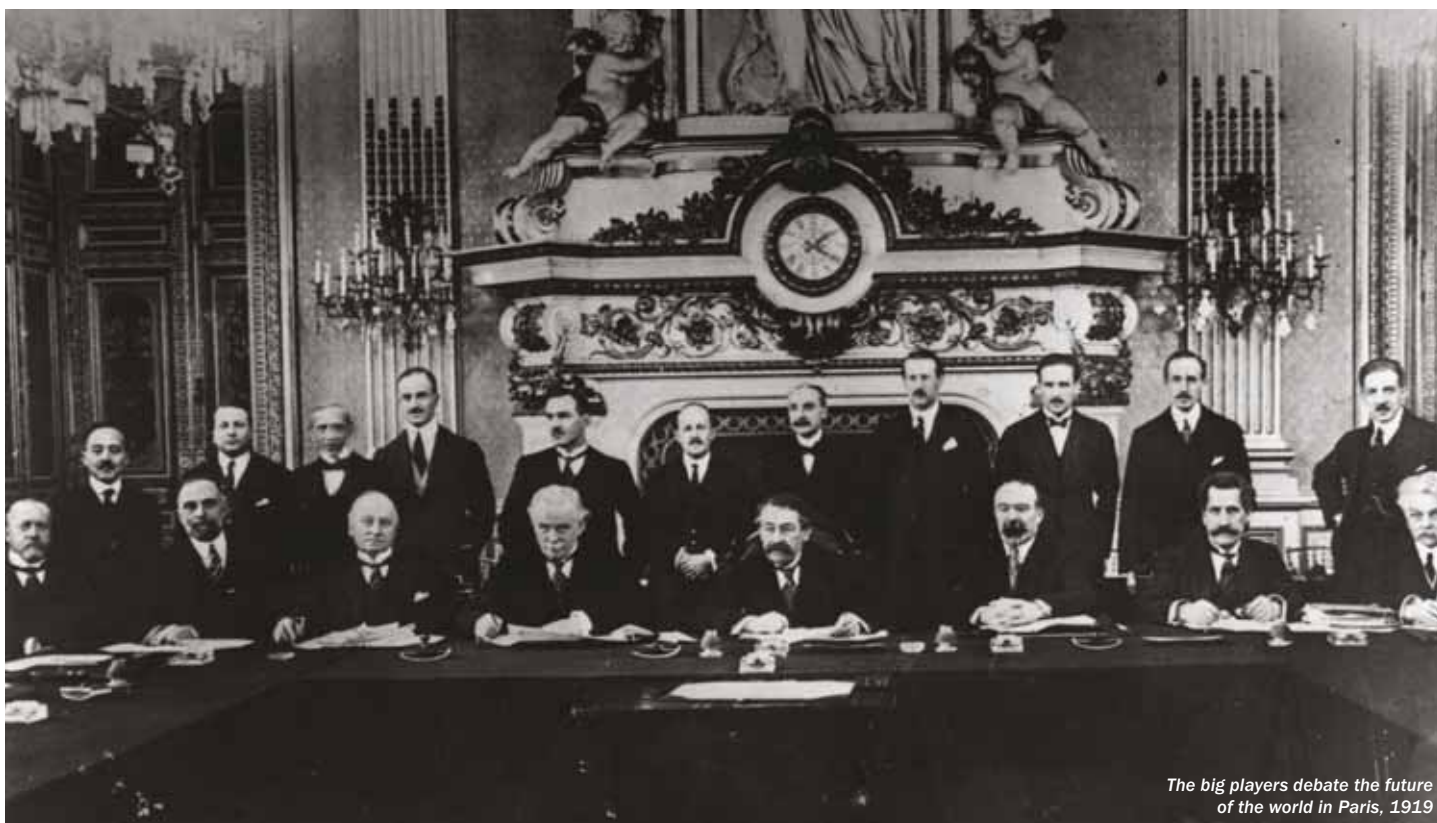
The failure of the Kerensky Offensive severely weakened the Provisional Government

and increased the relative power and influence of more radical groups like Vladimir Lenin's Bolsheviks, who launched their own revolution (the October Revolution) in November 1917. The Bolsheviks ousted the Provisional Government and handed power over to the soviets organised by workers, soldiers and peasants across Russia.

This is usually where the story ends for most people: the Bolsheviks are in control and it is a straight line from Lenin, through Stalin and Khrushchev, and on to the collapse of the USSR. In reality, however, the Bolshevik capture of Saint Petersburg and Moscow left most of the rest of Russia in stark opposition to the revolution. Groups from all across Russia fought back against the Bolsheviks, broadly grouped into three categories: the Whites (a mix of largely independent armed forces, ranging from old Tsarist loyalists to armies of over a dozen external powers, including the British, Americans and Japanese); the Greens (peasants); and the Blacks (anarchists).



On paper the Bolsheviks (the Reds) were no match for the vastly larger and in many cases well-funded forces arrayed against them. They had a few key advantages, however, that eventually secured them victory. The Bolsheviks held a central position, in control of the two most important cities in the country and the



*The big players debate the future of the world in Paris, 1919*

# PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

REPRESENTATIVES FROM 32 DIFFERENT POWERS, GREAT & SMALL, GATHERED IN PARIS IN 1919 TO DECIDE THE FATE OF THE WORLD. THEIR SUCCESS & FAILURE IS STILL DEBATED

The Paris Peace Conference was the primary means by which politicians sought to reshape the world after the end of World War I. It was a chance for powers that felt they had been marginalised to assert their independence, and an opportunity for imperial powers to further extend their global influence. This fundamental contraction caused significant problems for many of the key geographical areas the

diplomats in Paris needed to address. While many could agree to the basic justice of United States President Woodrow Wilson's call for 'national self-determination', the actual implementation of this ideal – the creation of a bunch of new nation-states – was enormously complex. How would one determine new national borders? Was it to be based on where ethnic or linguistic populations happened to currently be living?

This was enormously fraught due to the highly heterogeneous nature of places like Eastern Europe. These regions were far more ethnically heterogeneous in 1919 than in the modern day – a result of multiple rounds of ethnic cleansing after World War I, again during World War II, and finally yet again in the aftermath of World War II. Should borders be based on historical analogue states? If so the borders of empires like Poland-Lithuania and other Eastern European states and empires were bound to overlap, forcing people on the ground to determine where borders should lie by force of arms. This ambiguity set the stage for the widespread violence after World War I officially ended.

surrounding countryside. This not only gave the Bolsheviks access to a relatively large population of potential fighters but also, more importantly, gave them access to the best rail networks in the country. The Bolsheviks could exploit internal lines, meaning that if they needed to move troops from one front to another the distance they needed to travel was much shorter than the distance their opponents would have to move across if they wanted to consolidate their forces. The access to good quality rail lines and rolling stock also meant that, despite being outnumbered, the Bolsheviks could generally muster local numerical superiority as and when needed. This was a major strategic advantage that acted as a significant 'force multiplier'.

Perhaps most important of all was the unity of the Bolshevik forces relative to their opponents. The White forces were an enormously heterogeneous combination of armies of wildly varying quality, with many divergent political goals. Nationalist forces in Poland and Ukraine sought to establish

**“DESPITE BEING OUTNUMBERED, THE BOLSHEVIKS COULD GENERALLY MUSTER LOCAL NUMERICAL SUPERIORITY AS AND WHEN NEEDED”**

or expand their independence from Russia. Tsarist forces nominally fought for a return of the Tsarist monarchy, although more than a few monarchist leaders were really acting like medieval warlords fighting as much for their own power and prestige as anything else. International intervention forces had little stomach for any real fighting. Most of them having suffered enough in World War I, and generally failed to effectively coordinate with the dizzying array of Russian-led forces fighting the Bolsheviks (the comparison to Syria today is unavoidable).

Meanwhile, the Greens were poorly armed and poorly organised peasant armies often fighting simply for the preservation of their farmland and crops. The Greens, for all their bravery, were frequently misled by other armed forces. Bolshevik forces would on occasion raid peasant lands for food (the one thing the Bolsheviks were regularly in short supply of, being primarily an urban movement) loudly proclaiming themselves to be part of the Red Army. Other Bolsheviks would then later return to those same farms and villages and give some of the food back, proclaiming their largess to be done on behalf of the Bolsheviks, inviting cheers from the peasantry of 'Down with the Reds! Up with the Bolsheviks!'. If only they knew.

The Russian Civil War rumbled on for three years, until the Bolsheviks secured victory and the stabilisation of what would become the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – the USSR. The fundamental geo-political paradigm of the 20th century, the global contest between communism and free market capitalism and

democracy, thus began. The war did not end, however, before the fledgling Soviet state found itself in an unintentional war of conquest against an expansionist Poland. Newly independent Poland, like many of the other new states in Eastern Europe, recognised that the chaos that had erupted across the region was actually a fleeting opportunity to press territorial claims for a greater Poland, on par with the medieval powerhouse state of Poland-Lithuania that had dominated Eastern Europe and the Baltic five centuries earlier.

Seeing the apparent weakness of Russia, Polish forces marched east and hoped to extend their borders at Russia's expense. The fighting in this war, in some ways, pitted the war-fighting methods of modern, mass armies (for which the Soviets would become famous) with the more methodical, technology-obsessed war-fighting of the Western Front. Heavily supported with arms, munitions and even military leadership from a triumphant French army, the Polish forces soundly defeated a Soviet counter-invasion that had very nearly wiped Poland off the map as quickly as it had reappeared. It would be one of the few times Poland was in a position to successfully repel Russian invaders.

**“THE TREATY OF SÈVRES, SIGNED IN 1920, HAD NOT MERELY DISMANTLED THE OLD OTTOMAN EMPIRE, IT FUNDAMENTALLY RESHAPED THE MIDDLE EAST IN WAYS THAT WE ARE STILL DEALING WITH TODAY”**

**Turkey and the Middle East**

The situation just on the other side of the Black Sea was scarcely better. The Treaty of Sèvres, signed in 1920, had not merely dismantled the old Ottoman Empire – it fundamentally reshaped the Middle East in ways that we are still dealing with today. The Ottoman state, which had stretched from Spain, across North Africa, down the Arabian Peninsula, into the Balkans, and out to the borders of Persia, was reduced to a tiny rump state in central Anatolia. Gone was control of the Bosphorus, that most critical waterway for every power in the Black Sea region. Gone was control of the southern Anatolian coast and access to the Mediterranean.

The east was given up to an independent Armenian state. Instead, land that had been in Ottoman possession since the Middle Ages was given over to international control (in the case of the Bosphorus), or split between the French and the Italians (in the case of the southern coast). The Italians made the most significant push to assert their influence in Anatolia. Italian forces landed at Antalya, and for a brief time controlled a substantial swathe of territory hundreds of kilometres from the sea all along the southern coast of Anatolia.

Embarrassingly, Turkey even ceded land to the Greeks in western Anatolia. Citing the

# THE WORLD AT WAR

THE END OF WWI SHIFTED THE FIGHT TO SMALLER POWERS SPREAD OUT ACROSS EUROPE & THE MIDDLE EAST

**POLISH-SOVIET WAR  
POLAND 1919 - 1921**

One of a series of border-setting wars in Eastern Europe, the Polish-Soviet War was in many ways the most dramatic. Starting on the back of the Polish-Ukrainian War of 1919, which saw Poland successfully push its borders eastward while the diplomats in Paris were still debating the future of the world, the Polish-Soviet War nearly saw the Soviets create an Eastern Europe similar to the one that would exist after 1945. The introduction of French arms, including Renault FT-17 tanks (creating the first ever Polish armoured units), helped turn the tide of the war after initial Soviet successes, securing the survival of the Polish state, at least until 1939.



*Russian artillery during the Polish-Soviet War, stationed near the Bug River*

**IRISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE  
IRELAND 1919 - 1921**

**EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION  
EGYPT 1919**

**THE SENUSSI WAR  
SOUTHERN LIBYA 1914 - 1920**

In 1914 the Senussi, a sect of Islam, declared jihad against the Europeans in the eastern Sahara. Fighting raged across Algeria, Tunisia, Chad, Niger, Sudan and Egypt before finally coming to a close in 1920.

**UNITED STATES OCCUPATION OF HAITI  
HAITI 1915 - 1934**



**RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR**

RUSSIA 1917 - 1922

By far the largest of the wars that carried on after the end of World War I. Vast numbers of men and armaments were arrayed across a conflict stretching from Eastern Europe all the way to Central Asia. At least 7 million combatants took part at one point or another, ranging from dozens of different nations, fighting for a wide range of different reasons. Some fought for independence and survival, others for fame, wealth and glory. Still others fought to carry on the work of the revolution and carry Marxist-Leninism into reality.



*Admiral Kolchak, an important White Russian commander, reviews his troops in 1919*



*Mustafa Kemal Atatürk reviewing his troops before battle with the Greeks in western Anatolia*

**TURKISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE**

ANATOLIA, 1919 - 1923

The Ottoman Empire famously broke into the world of European politics in 1453 with the capture of Constantinople and the final extinguishing of the last, faint embers of the ancient Roman Empire. To find themselves reduced from a great empire that stretched across three continents to a tiny ethnic state in central and northern Anatolia in 1919 was unbearable and untenable. Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal the Turks would eventually reassert their status and geographical integrity in wars against the French, Italians and Greeks after the end of World War I.

**IRAQI REVOLT**

IRAQ, MAY - OCTOBER 1920

**THE NGOLOK REBELLIONS**

CHINA 1917 - 1949

**“SOME FOUGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE AND SURVIVAL, OTHERS FOR FAME, WEALTH AND GLORY”**

**CREATION OF SAUDI ARABIA**

SAUDI ARABIA 1916 - 1930

Getting its start with the Arab Revolt in 1916, the House of Saud, like many other powerful families, jostled for power and influence in the region. It took a series of wars before they were able to unite the Najd and Hedjaz into the modern state of Saudi Arabia.

**AMRITSAR MASSACRE**

AMRITSAR, INDIA 1919

**FRANCO-SYRIAN WAR**

SYRIA, MARCH - JUNE 1920

Part of the broader fallout from the collapse of Ottoman supremacy in the Middle East, the Franco-Syrian War ensured French control over Syria, rather than control over the Arab king Faisal.



*Henri Gouraud, left, surveys the fields of the Western Front. He would play a key role in extending French imperial control over Syria in 1920*

Map: Rocio Espin



Vladimir Lenin giving a speech in Red Square, Moscow, on 25 May 1919. The speech was celebrating the first anniversary of the creation of Soviet armed forces

need to protect the sizable Greek population in and around the city of Smyrna, Greek forces landed at Smyrna in May 1919 and won the right, through the League of Nations, to operate a sort of protectorate over Smyrna and the surrounding lands for an undetermined length of time. Somehow unsatisfied with the first Greek expansion into Asia Minor in millennia, Greek forces actually pressed on, put together a capable army and invaded central Anatolia, vaguely marching towards Ankara, the capital of the new Turkish state.

The Greek plan, in the most generous reading, was unclear. It seems inconceivable that Greek forces could have effectively conquered and occupied a vast, interior country without easy access to the sea. Was their intention to conquer all of Anatolia, extending Greek influence into a region that was last truly Greek under the reign of Alexander the Great and his Seleucid progenitors?

In any event, the Greeks would come up against Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who put any Greek dreams of a return to imperial glory quickly in their place. Atatürk was an experienced military officer who had seen action in Libya in 1911 when, as a relatively junior officer, he snuck through the deserts of Egypt into Saharan Libya and organised a force of nomadic warriors to continually harry and harass the Italian invaders.

Atatürk was experienced in turning nothing into something, in building new, effective forces and leading them to perform far beyond what they would have been capable of otherwise. Within three years Atatürk and his armies had conquered back all of Anatolia, finally declaring victory after defeating the last of the Greek forces at Smyrna in 1922. The Treaty of Lausanne was quickly agreed upon and signed shortly after, in 1923, enshrining the modern Turkish borders we know today.

Similar jostling and fighting occurred across the Middle East in the period after the end of World War I. It is popular to point to landmark agreements like Sykes-Picot, or the mandate system established by the League of Nations,

Below: King Faisal (centre) with Lawrence of Arabia (second from right), advisors and his African slave at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919



**“MIDDLE EASTERN, PRINCIPALLY ARAB, LEADERS ACROSS THE REGION PRESSED THEIR CASE AND FOUGHT TO ASSERT THEIR INDEPENDENCE”**

to imply that the borders of the Middle East were imposed by foreign (European) powers, with no input from the Arabs and others who actually lived in the region. Nothing could be further from the truth. Middle Eastern, principally Arab, leaders across the region pressed their case and fought to assert their independence. Most famous of them was King Faisal of Syria and later Iraq. Faisal Ibn Hussein bin Ali al-Hashemi was born in Mecca to the grand sharif of Mecca in 1885. During World War I he became involved in the Arab Revolt, ultimately leading the Northern Army of the Arab rebels, fighting in Jordan and Syria. Throughout the war Faisal seemed

to play each side off each other in his bid for personal power and influence. Faisal at different times nominally fought on behalf of his father's bid for a pan-Arab kingdom, at other times was happy to side more closely with the British, and on yet other occasions treated with the Ottomans in the hopes of being allowed to rule Syria as a vassal of the Empire.

With the end of the war and the political future of the Middle East still in question Faisal found himself proclaimed king of Syria in March 1920 by the Syrian National Committee. The very next month saw Syria handed over to France as a 'mandate' protectorate, leading to the brief Franco-Syrian war as both sides sought to assert their right to control the country. The war came to a climax on 24 July 1920 when French forces, under the command of the venerated General Henri Gouraud, who had lost his right arm and half of his leg during the Dardanelles campaign, decisively defeated the Arab forces at the Battle of Maysalun.

French tanks formed up in the centre, flanked on either side by infantry, and advanced against the Arab camel cavalry. Initially the going was tough as Syrian artillery caused substantial problems for the French infantry (many of whom were West African tirailleurs sénégalais) and armour alike, but over time French artillery gained superiority and eventually decided the day. The Syrian line broke, their minister of war, Yusuf al-Azma, was killed, and the fleeing Syrians were harried by French aircraft, ensuring the finality of the rout.

This would not be the last battle to decide the fate of the Middle East in the 1920s – the British would face similar wars and rebellions in Aden and Iraq – but it set the scene for the low-level conflicts that would rumble on through the early 1920s. As in Eastern Europe, World War I did not end in the Middle East on 11 November 1918. Instead, the ending of the Great War simply set the stage for the next round of conflicts to determine the geo-political landscape of the 20th century.





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# MODEL WAR PLANES EVERY AIRCRAFT HAS A STORY

Between June 1940 and November 1942 the small but strategically important island of Malta, situated in the Mediterranean Sea, became the most heavily bombed place on earth when first Italian and then German bombers attempted to force the island to surrender.

Merchant shipping convoys were also attacked in an attempt to prevent the island being re-supplied with food and military equipment. Initially Malta's only defending fighter aircraft were outdated *Gloster Gladiators* and then *Hawker Hurricanes* but at the height of the

battle, cannon armed and tropicalized *Spitfire Mk.Vb*s were used to intercept the German *Junkers Ju88* and *Ju87 Stuka* dive bombers which were escorted by *Messerschmitt Bf109Es*.

It became a struggle that was in some ways similar to the Battle of Britain. Eventually at the end of 1942, the war in North Africa had been won by the Allies so Malta was no longer of such importance to the Axis powers and the bombing stopped allowing the starving civil population to be re-supplied by sea.



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# ART IN THE AFTERMATH

A new title explores the work – official & unofficial – of artists who captured the immediate & enduring aftermath of WWI

In the years following 1918, thousands of soldiers from across the globe returned home to a world that had already been irreversibly changed. In his new title, *The Armistice And The Aftermath: The Story In Art*, author and broadcaster John Fairley tells the story of the Armistice and post-war years through contemporary artworks. From William Orpen, who was officially commissioned to produce grand depictions of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, to the less orthodox Otto Dix, a veteran who portrayed the harsh and brutal realities of the war from the German perspective, this collection presents a range of styles and experiences of life in the aftermath of the war. Here author John Fairley describes a selection of the artworks in his new book.

***The Armistice And The Aftermath* is available now from Pen & Sword Books.**

**A Grenadier Guardsman**  
*William Orpen*





**Armistice Day, 1918**  
*Gifford Beal*

**Armistice Night, Amiens**

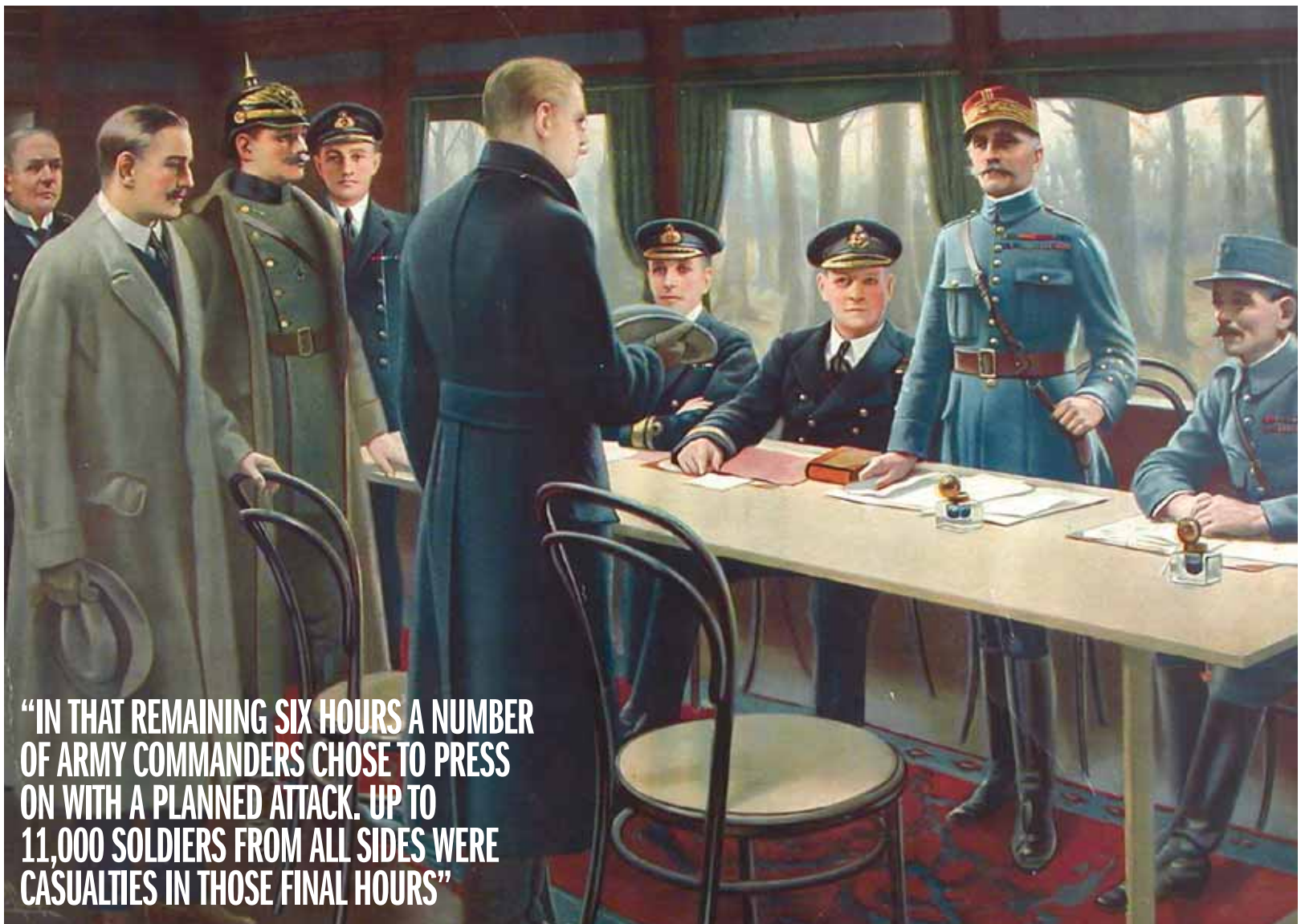
*William Orpen*

The Armistice celebrations were, across the whole of the Western world, probably the most joyous day of the entire century, as William Orpen's painting of Amiens vividly shows. But not everyone was so delighted. Orpen himself, that morning, had seen a servant girl in his hotel weeping at the unwelcome prospect of her soldier husband coming home.



**The Signing Of The Armistice** *Maurice Pillard Verneuil*

Brought to see Marshal Foch, the Allied supreme commander, in his railway carriage, the Germans finally signed the Armistice agreement at 5am on 11 November. It was to come into effect at 11am, but in that remaining six hours a number of army commanders chose to press on with a planned attack. Up to 11,000 soldiers from all sides were casualties in those final hours.



**“IN THAT REMAINING SIX HOURS A NUMBER OF ARMY COMMANDERS CHOSE TO PRESS ON WITH A PLANNED ATTACK. UP TO 11,000 SOLDIERS FROM ALL SIDES WERE CASUALTIES IN THOSE FINAL HOURS”**

**“SAILORS STILL MANNING THE IMPRISONED GERMAN BATTLE FLEET WERE ORDERED BY THEIR COMMANDING OFFICER – TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE FACT THE GUARDIAN BRITISH FLEET HAD SAILED OFF FOR EXERCISES – TO OPEN THE SEA COCKS”**

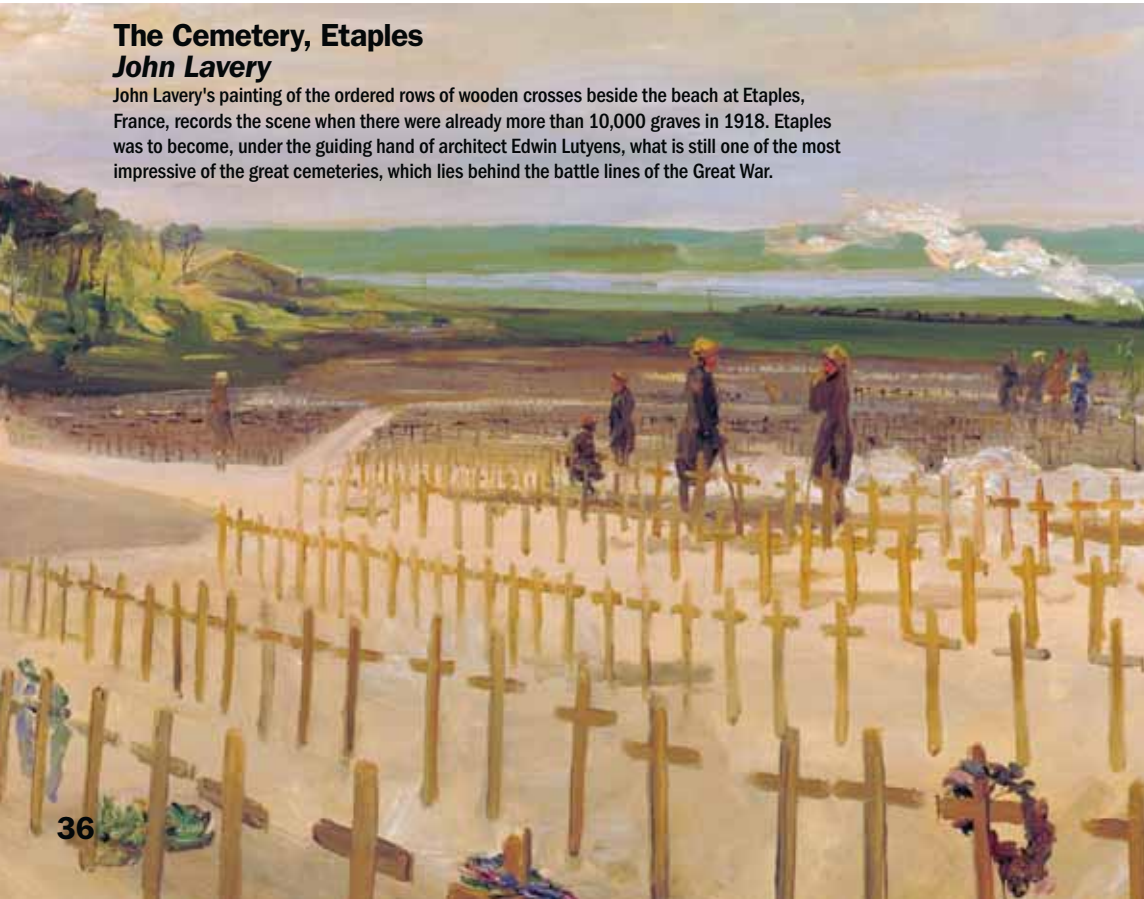


**Sinking Of The German Fleet**  
**Bernard Gribble**

Bernard Gribble's painting of German ships sinking at Scapa Flow, in the Orkneys, is an eyewitness account of when the sailors still manning the imprisoned German battle fleet were ordered by their commanding officer – taking advantage of the fact the guardian British fleet had sailed off for exercises – to open the sea cocks. The British came back to find 52 German navy vessels sinking to the bottom.

**The Cemetery, Etaples**  
**John Lavery**

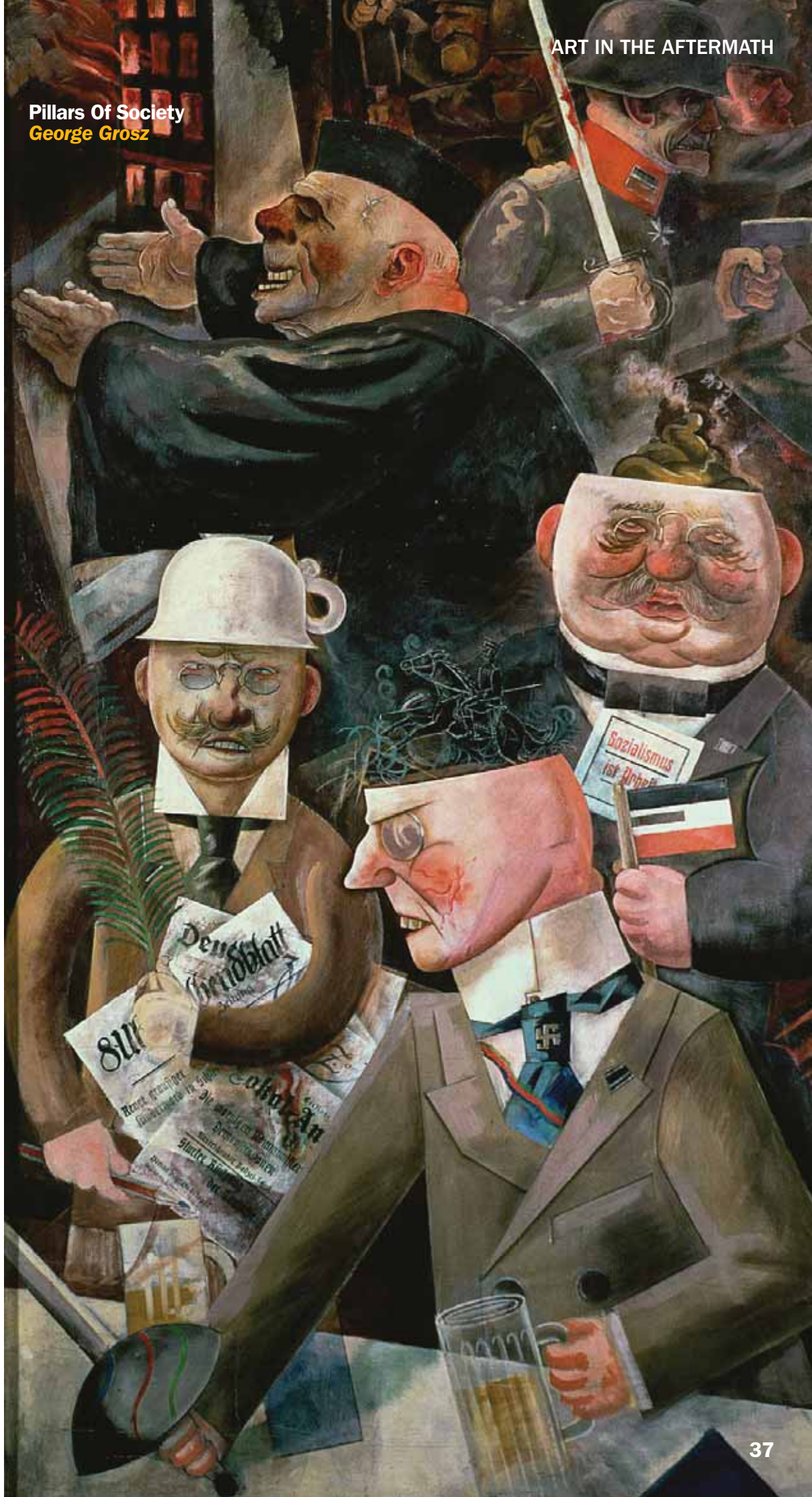
John Lavery's painting of the ordered rows of wooden crosses beside the beach at Etaples, France, records the scene when there were already more than 10,000 graves in 1918. Etaples was to become, under the guiding hand of architect Edwin Lutyens, what is still one of the most impressive of the great cemeteries, which lies behind the battle lines of the Great War.

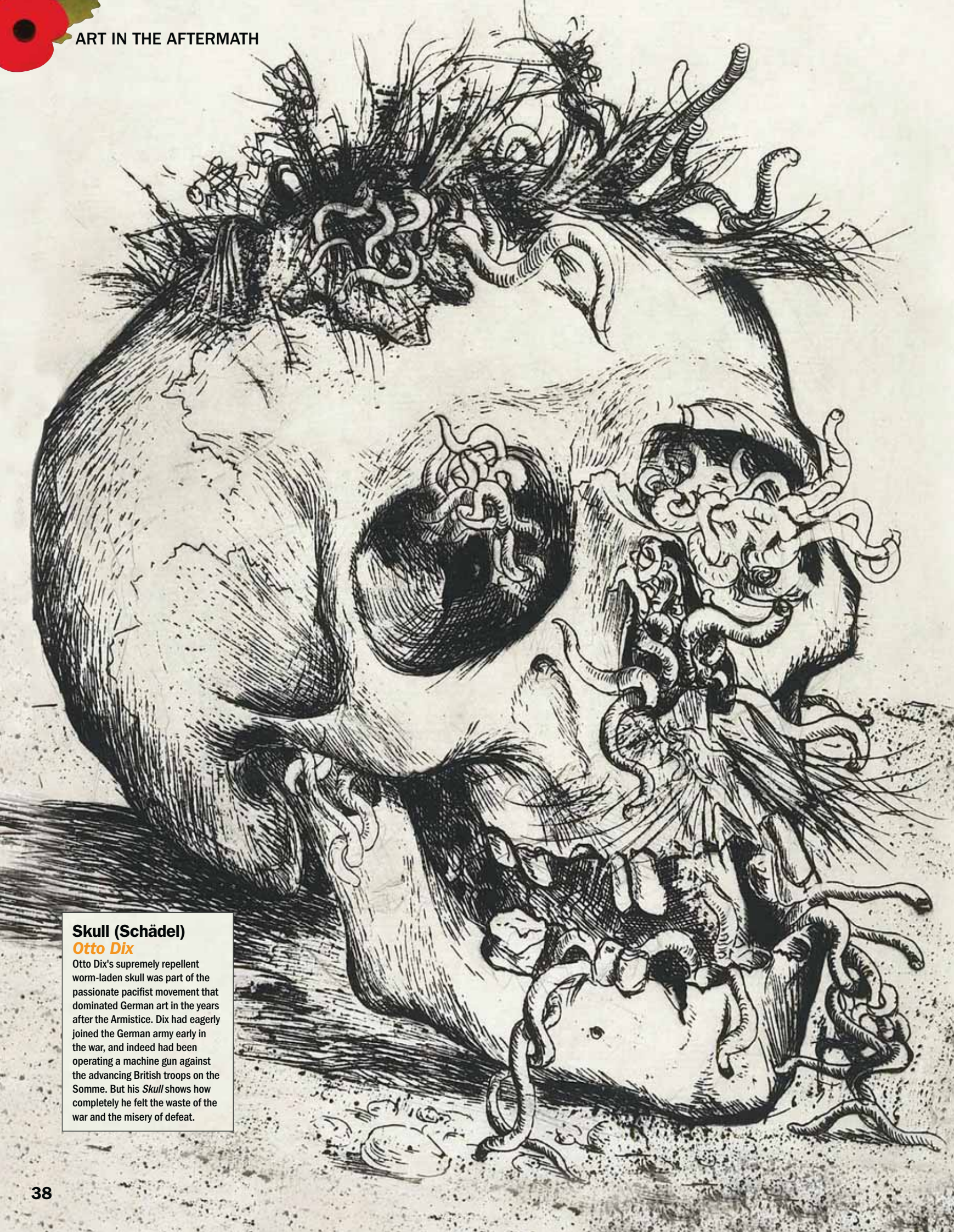


**Armistice Day, Paris**  
**Frank Myers Boggs**



Pillars Of Society  
George Grosz





**Skull (Schädel)**

**Otto Dix**

Otto Dix's supremely repellent worm-laden skull was part of the passionate pacifist movement that dominated German art in the years after the Armistice. Dix had eagerly joined the German army early in the war, and indeed had been operating a machine gun against the advancing British troops on the Somme. But his *Skull* shows how completely he felt the waste of the war and the misery of defeat.



**“RAID ON OUR TRENCH, ONE OF THE MOST VIVID EVOCATIONS OF THE ACTUALITY OF TRENCH FIGHTING, WAS PAINTED BY THE AMERICAN SOLDIER CLAGGETT WILSON”**

**Raid On Our Trench**  
**Claggett Wilson**

*Raid On Our Trench*, one of the most vivid evocations of the actuality of trench fighting, was painted by the American soldier Claggett Wilson only a few years after he had got back from the war. It had taken him a long time to be able to make this and other war paintings. But he continued to work, and was recommended for a Nobel Prize.

**Harvest Of Battle**  
**Christopher R.W. Nevinson**



# WILFRED OWEN

## THE FINAL LINE, 1918

WORDS GRACE FREEMAN

One of the war's most celebrated writers was tragically killed just a week before the end of the war

**"I** came out in order to help these boys," wrote Wilfred Owen to his mother, Susan Owen, in a letter dated September 1917, "directly, by leading them as well as an officer can; indirectly, by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a pleader can. I have done the first." Widely regarded as the greatest war poet – and one of the finest of the 20th century – Owen was as focused and as skilled a soldier as he was a bard, his bravery charged by his desire to protect his fellow men of the Manchester Regiment.

In the autumn of 1917 he spent a short period of convalescence at Craiglockhart War

Hospital, where he was treated for shellshock following action at Savy Wood near Saint-Quentin, before returning to the frontline in August 1918 for the final few months of his young life – despite the opportunity to remain on home duty. Siegfried Sassoon, Owen's friend and a fellow poet, had appealed to him otherwise, but Owen was adamant and dutiful in continuing to declare the horrors of the war. "I am much gladder to be going out again than afraid. I shall be able to cry my outcry; playing my part."

By the time Owen arrived back in France, the 1918 Spring

**Right:** Wilfred Owen, pictured around 1916, was a brave soldier who felt a strong sense of duty to his comrades

**Left:** Wilfred Owen's gravestone. It features the inscription, "Shall life renew these bodies? Of a truth all death will he annul", chosen by his mother from Owen's poem 'The End'



Image: Getty



Offensive, a series of German attacks that had begun in April, was almost over, and the Allies had launched the Hundred Days Offensive, starting with the Battle of Amiens, which would quickly reclaim all the ground captured by the German army and the eventual disintegration of the Hindenburg Line.

The 2nd Manchesters had by now been withdrawn twice and were positioned at the town of Corbie. Owen, who had been posted to Amiens, reported to the regimental adjutant about their proximity and was subsequently appointed as the bombing officer to D Company, despite having no special knowledge of the weapons.

Around this time, Owen drafted the poem *Smile, Smile, Smile* and, over a year after he had first begun it, finally completed *The Sentry*, whose origins were folded in the furrows of Beaumont Hamel, in the Somme, in early 1917, when a shell bombardment had resulted in a young sentinel being blinded.

**“WE DREDGED HIM UP, FOR KILLED,  
UNTIL HE WHINED “O SIR, MY EYES  
- I’M BLIND - I’M BLIND, I’M BLIND!”**

Towards the end of the month, the regiment, along with the rest of the 96th Brigade, journeyed southeast to Vendelles, further east along to Bellenglise, which had only just been recaptured by the Allies, then a little further east still, to the small village of Magny-la-Fosse. As they moved into position in the hamlet, they came under fire from the Germans; two men were killed and over 20 were wounded.

On the evening of 30 September, the 96th Brigade advanced to Joncourt, with D Company of the 2nd Manchesters marching in front. The attack was fiercely fought over the next two nights, and the ground was successfully

held. Following the push and “for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty” Owen was recommended for the Military Cross and was, posthumously, awarded it.

One of the fatalities at Joncourt was Private Jones, Owen’s servant, who had been with the soldier-poet since 1917 and who, he wrote to Sassoon, was “shot through the head [and] lay on top of me, soaking my shoulder, for half an hour”. On 3 October, the men retreated into dugouts along the Saint-Quentin Canal, where they came under German fire and lost over 20 men, with 70 injured. Two days later, they journeyed west to Hancourt – a ruined village, previously held by the Germans – and stayed there for a short while, in order to get some rest and to recover.

Owen was still in command of D Company of the 2nd Manchesters, and towards the middle of October, they began their steady journey back to the frontline, passing through Busigny, before reaching Saint-Souplet, where the American army was forcing a German retreat; this gradual deconstruction of the Hindenburg Line – which had begun in August, as Wilfred Owen returned to France – would subsequently

become known as the Allies’ final ‘advance to victory’ in the war.

On the last evening of October in 1918, Owen penned a letter home – his last – to his mother, from the smoky cellar of the Forester’s House in Ors.

**“OF THIS I AM CERTAIN: YOU COULD NOT  
BE VISITED BY A BAND OF FRIENDS HALF  
SO FINE AS SURROUND ME HERE”**

The night of 3 November was chosen for the 96th Brigade to cross the Sambre-Oise Canal, to assault the Germans that were situated on the opposite bank. On 4 November 1918, at 5.45am, the shrill whistle blew and Wilfred Owen led the soldiers closer to the towpath, and five minutes later they scrambled up towards the muddy bank of the canal. On the other side was a relentless barrage of German bullets, which were returned by the 2nd Manchesters and surrounding regiments as they attempted to make it over the canal with a makeshift bridge of wooden floats. Among the wreckage walked Owen, shouting words of encouragement to his men. Lieutenant Foulkes, a comrade who was wounded during the same attack, later said that Owen was last seen trying to get across the water on a temporary raft.

By noon that day, the surviving soldiers of the regiment had successfully traversed the Sambre-Oise Canal, and a mere seven days later the groans and the gunfire of the battlefields ceased for the final time. In Shrewsbury, where Owen’s family lived, the bells of the Armistice were ringing as the telegram announcing his death, at the age of 25, arrived. Wilfred Owen lies in Ors Communal Cemetery, alongside others who were killed that same day.

*Ors Communal Cemetery in France is Wilfred Owen’s final resting place, along with dozens of others who died just days before the end of the war*

**“OWEN WAS AS FOCUSED  
AND AS SKILLED A SOLDIER  
AS HE WAS A BARD, HIS  
BRAVERY CHARGED BY  
HIS DESIRE TO PROTECT  
HIS FELLOW MEN OF THE  
MANCHESTER REGIMENT”**

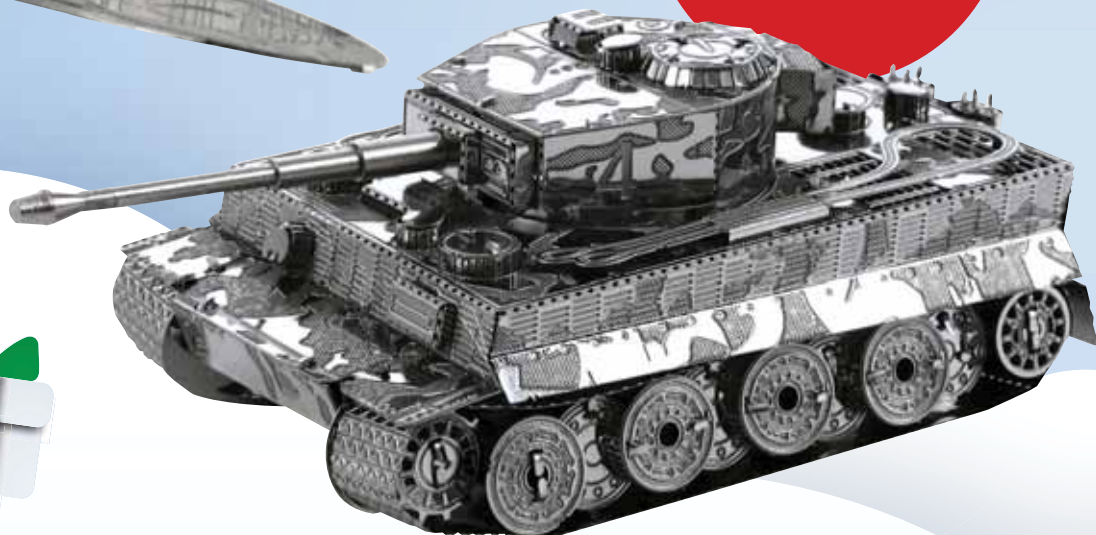
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A man of extraordinary  
courage: Captain Witold  
Pilecki (1901-1948)

**“ONE PRISONER WAS ASKED BY THE  
SS TO RUN TO A POST BY THE SIDE OF  
THE ROAD, ONLY TO BE SHOT DOWN.  
TEN MEN WERE THEN DRAGGED OUT  
AND SHOT AT RANDOM AS ‘COLLECTIVE  
RESPONSIBILITY’ FOR THE ‘ESCAPE’”**

# INFILTRATING AUSCHWITZ

WORDS MARIANNA BUKOWSKI

On the morning of 19 September 1940, Witold Pilecki did what most would find unthinkable – he deliberately walked straight into a German street roundup, with the aim of being arrested and sent to Auschwitz

**A**s a man of exceptional courage, Captain Witold Pilecki stands near-peerless in the pantheon of wartime heroes, and his mission in Auschwitz was just one of many extraordinarily brave acts of his life.

He was born on 13 May 1901 in Olonets, northern Russia. His family had suffered the same fate as countless other Polish families – his grandfather had been deported to Siberia, following the failed uprising of 1863. During the time of Partitions when Poland, carved up between Russia, Prussia and Austria, could not be found on any map, the Pilecki family remained faithful Polish patriots. In 1910, to avoid the Russification of his children, Witold's father sent him and his siblings to school in Vilnius, one of the capitals of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. There, Witold joined the scout movement and later became part of the Polish underground military organisation.

At the outbreak of WWI, the Pilecki family was not in Vilnius, but before the war's end Witold joined the Vilnius Self-Defence militia, which first fought the Germans holding the city in 1918 and later Red Army units. Although Poland regained its independence at the end of WWI, it was not long before Witold Pilecki was forced to fight again, this time against the Bolsheviks.

The Polish-Soviet War (1919-1920) is rarely mentioned in the West, yet it not only resulted in a Polish victory, but also stopped Lenin's communist conquest of Europe.

Few years in Witold Pilecki's life were to be peaceful. In 1926 he took over the ruined family estate in Sukurcze, and later met his future wife, Maria Ostrowska, with whom he was to have two children: Andrzej, born in 1932, and Zofia, in 1933. By 1939 war was yet again on the horizon.

## Prisoner no. 4859

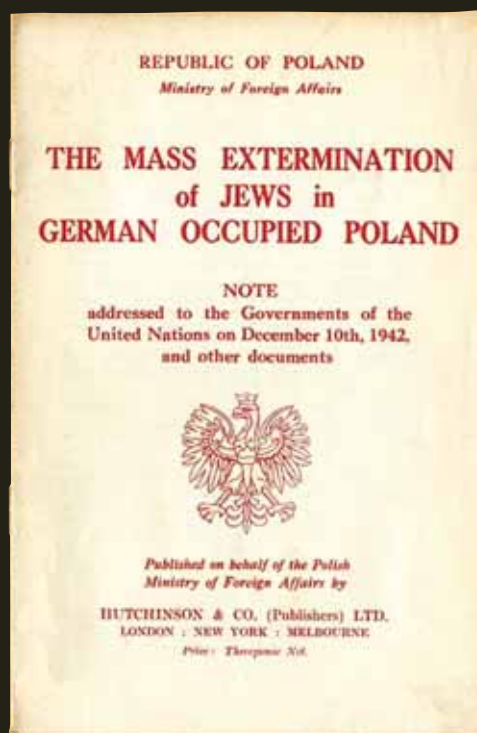
On 26 August 1939, the cavalry of the 19th Infantry Division mobilised, among them Reserve Cavalry Second Lieutenant Witold Pilecki. Reaching their deployment point on 4 September, they were assaulted by Germany's 1st Armoured Division. When defeated, the Polish soldiers dispersed, and Pilecki succeeded in crossing the Vistula River

where he joined the 41st Infantry Division. Fierce fighting followed before the division was shattered, but Pilecki never surrendered. Instead, together with his uhlans, they continued fighting as a guerrilla unit against the enemy until 17 October 1939.

In November Pilecki reached German-occupied Warsaw, and together with Major Jan

**“I BADE FAREWELL TO  
EVERYTHING I HAD HITHERTO  
KNOWN ON THIS EARTH  
AND ENTERED SOMETHING  
SEEMINGLY NO LONGER OF IT”**

*Published by the Polish Government in Exile, the first official report of the Mass Extermination of Jews in German Occupied Poland was shared with the Allies in 1942*



Włodarkiewicz resolved to establish the Secret Polish Army, to continue the fight for a free Poland. The German occupation of Warsaw was exceptionally brutal from the very start. Mass arrests and executions of civil servants, doctors, teachers, lawyers and scientists began immediately, and the civilian population lived in a state of constant terror. Street round-ups and deportations for forced labour to Germany became increasingly frequent. When arrested, many underground soldiers of the Secret Army were being sent to a location in Oswiecim, southern Poland, where in 1940 the Germans set up Auschwitz concentration camp, initially intended for Polish political prisoners.

Accounts differ as to whether it was Pilecki's idea to organise a resistance unit from within Auschwitz, or General Stefan 'Grot' Rowecki's, the chief commander of the Union for Armed Struggle. Either way, Pilecki volunteered for the mission.

Like all members of the resistance, Pilecki operated under a false name: Tomasz Serafinski. The real Serafinski, a reserve lieutenant of the Warsaw defence campaign, had escaped capture and left his ID documents in the safehouse in which Pilecki was staying. Early on the morning of 19 September 1940, Pilecki deliberately walked straight into a street round-up and was arrested as Tomasz Serafinski. Alongside 1,705 individuals, he reached Auschwitz on the night of the 21-22 September 1940, where he was assigned inmate no. 4859.

Pilecki wrote that upon arrival, one prisoner was asked by the SS to run to a post by the side of the road, only to be shot down. Ten men were then dragged out and shot at random as "collective responsibility" for the "escape" that the SS themselves had just staged. "I bade farewell to everything I had hitherto known on this earth and entered something seemingly no longer of it," he wrote.

Pilecki's organisation at Auschwitz was to have three main goals: boosting the morale of inmates; sending out reports about conditions in the camp; and preparing for an armed uprising. His 'cells' were set up in something he called "fives" – where each group operated independently of one another. This way, if



*The Polish Underground State became the largest organised resistance in occupied Europe*

**“THE GAME I WAS NOW PLAYING IN AUSCHWITZ WAS DANGEROUS. THIS SENTENCE DOES NOT REALLY CONVEY THE REALITY; IN FACT, I HAD GONE FAR BEYOND WHAT PEOPLE IN THE REAL WORLD WOULD CONSIDER DANGEROUS”**

caught, it minimised the risk for the entire organisation. By October 1940 he had set up his first ‘top fives’ and shortly after sent his first report from Auschwitz. Several weeks later, his report was received in Warsaw by General Stefan Grot Rowecki. On 18 March 1941 the first report reached London.

Pilecki’s actions were described by M.R.D. Foot in the classic book *Six Faces Of Courage* as “so daring – at first glance, to the point of absurdity – were his notions of how to resist, that it might even be thought he had a death-wish”. Of course, Pilecki didn’t have such a death wish, but he was fully aware of the highly dangerous situation he had put himself in: “The game I was now playing in Auschwitz was dangerous. This sentence does not really convey the reality; in fact, I had gone far beyond

what people in the real world would consider dangerous,” he wrote.

Pilecki’s report from Auschwitz is a harrowing document, clearly describing the development of mass slaughter on an unprecedented scale. During his time in Auschwitz he also fell seriously ill several times, which usually was just another death sentence. However, not only did he have the psychological and physical resilience to withstand the inhuman conditions of the camp and survive, but he also continued his mission.

The military resistance organisation Pilecki managed to put together was extraordinary considering the conditions at Auschwitz. Four battalions of followers were organised, about 500 whom knew Pilecki by sight as the secret resistance leader. “For some months now

we have been able to take over the camp on more or less a daily basis,” Pilecki stated. But without outside assistance there was little chance of success in liberating the camp.

### **Resistance**

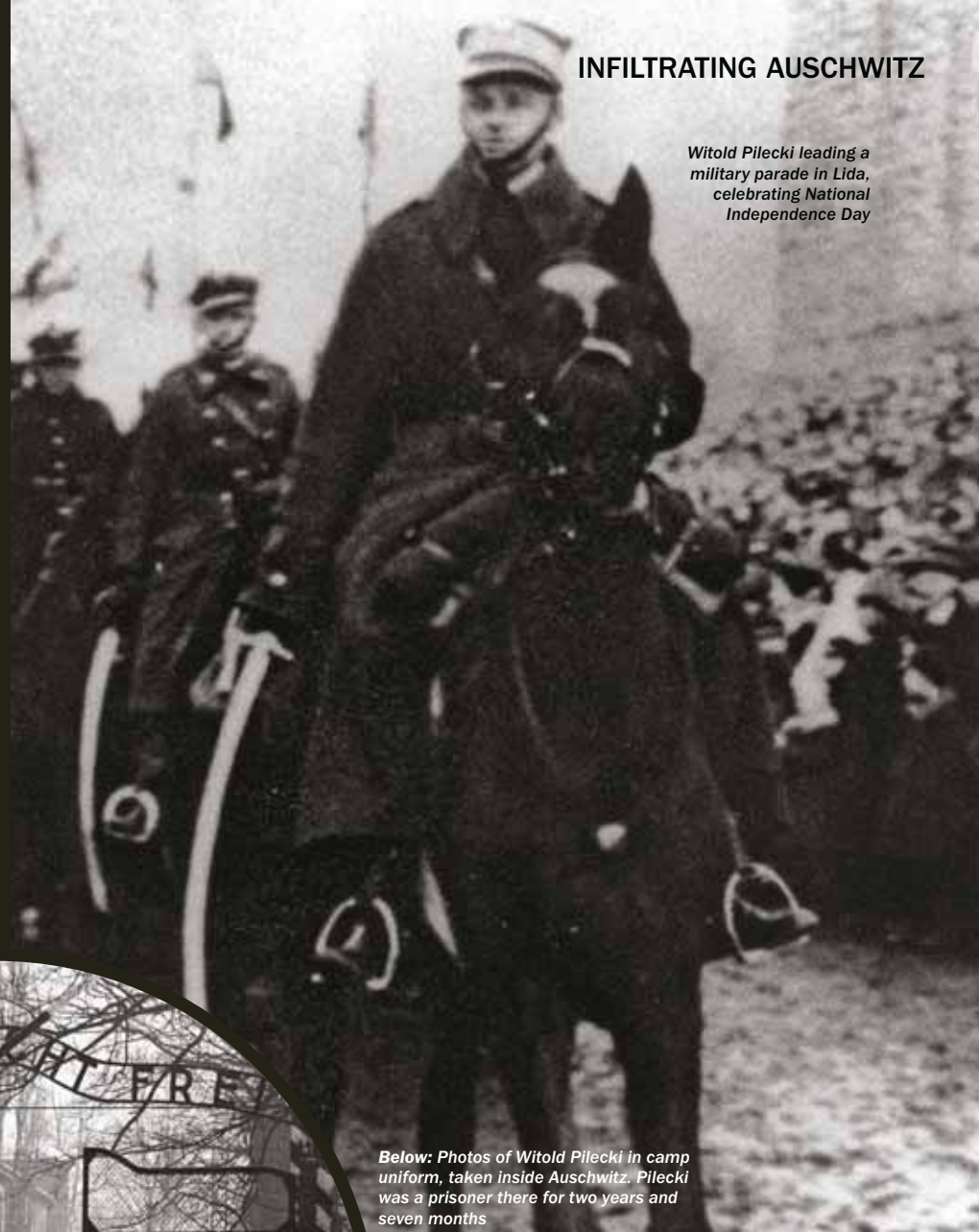
As the years passed, the Polish Underground authorities did not seem to hear Pilecki’s pleas for help in liberating the camp, and he decided to escape in the spring of 1943 in order to make his case in person. He had been a prisoner in Auschwitz for two years and seven months. With meticulous preparation, Pilecki, together with two fellow inmates, managed to get themselves on the nightshift squad in the camp bakery, which was located outside of the main camp wire. With a few seconds of extraordinary luck, they took the leap to

## INFILTRATING AUSCHWITZ

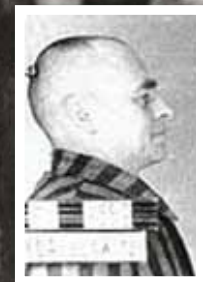
*Witold Pilecki leading a military parade in Lida, celebrating National Independence Day*



*Below: 'Hell on Earth' - Auschwitz was initially set up by the Germans to hold Polish political prisoners*



*Below: Photos of Witold Pilecki in camp uniform, taken inside Auschwitz. Pilecki was a prisoner there for two years and seven months*



freedom and managed to escape on the night of 26 April 1943.

The journey back to Warsaw took several months, and by a curious turn of circumstances en route, Pilecki met with the real Serafinski, now a deputy commander of a local Home Army post in the town of Nowy Wisnicz. Arriving in Warsaw in August, Pilecki personally submitted his report about the conditions of the camp and proposed military plans aimed at liberating the camp's prisoners.

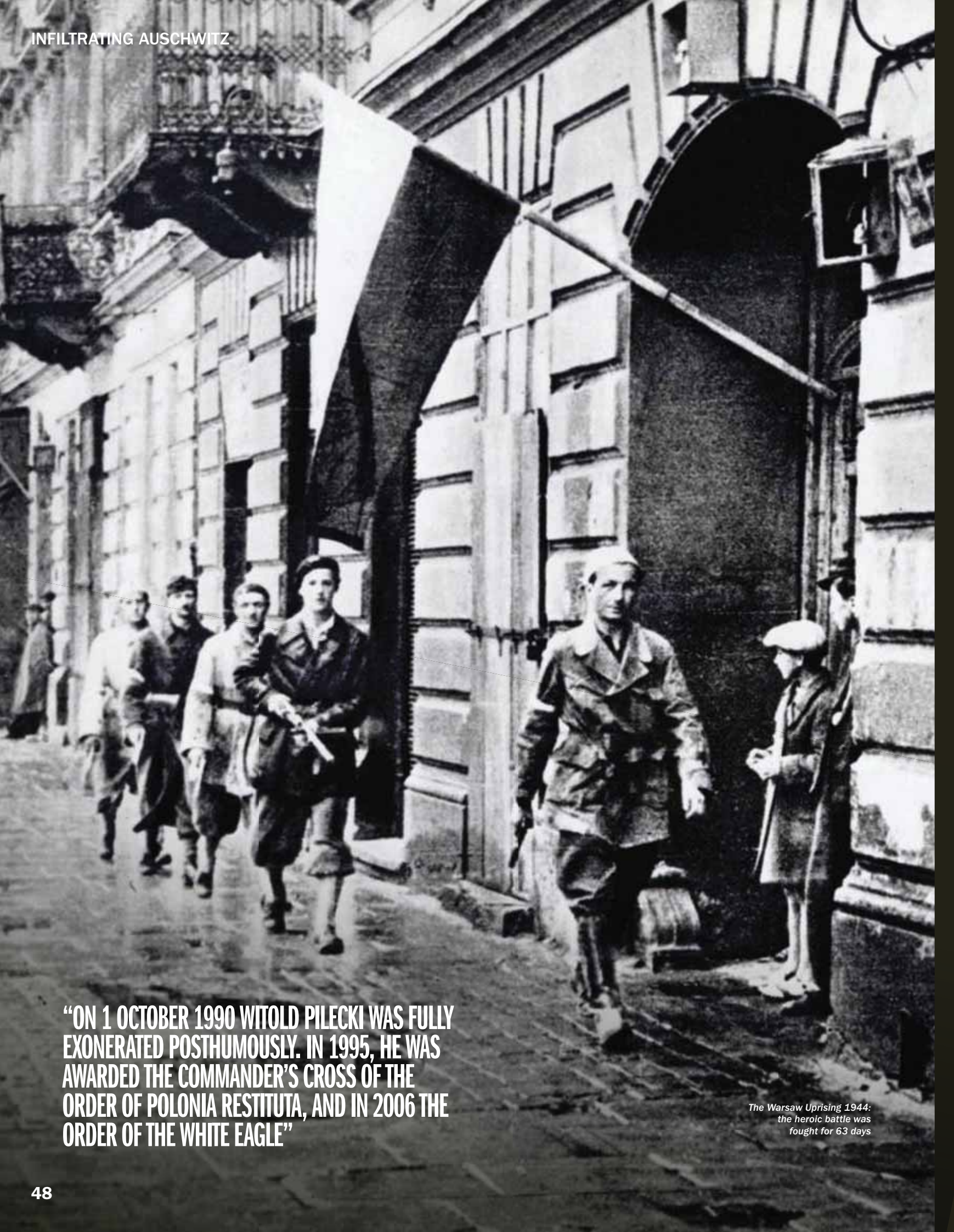
In recognition of his heroic mission, Pilecki was promoted to the rank of cavalry rotamaster (equivalent to infantry captain) by General Bór-Komorowski, the commander-in-chief of the Home Army.

However, his plan to seize the camp and help free the inmates was not approved.

**"THE POLISH UNDERGROUND AUTHORITIES DID NOT SEEM TO HEAR PILECKI'S PLEAS FOR HELP IN LIBERATING THE CAMP, & HE DECIDED TO ESCAPE IN THE SPRING OF 1943 TO MAKE HIS CASE IN PERSON. HE HAD BEEN A PRISONER IN AUSCHWITZ FOR TWO YEARS & SEVEN MONTHS"**

The Home Army did consider an attack but assessed that it did not have the strength to hold off the Germans for the necessary time. Pilecki expressed his disappointment and understandable anger about the outside world's "continual, ignorant silence" to the suffering in the camp in his report.

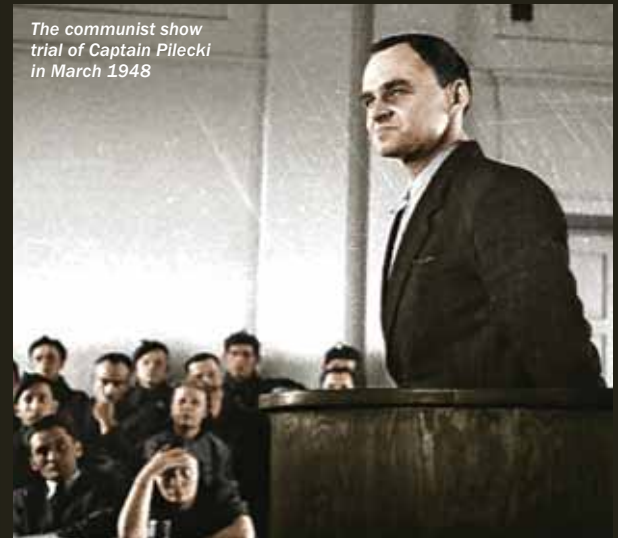
As the tide of war turned, Pilecki became part of a new underground organisation aiming to continue the fight for Poland's independence in the ever-more likely event of a new Soviet occupation following a German defeat. However, with the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising on 1 August 1944, the work had to be abandoned. As the Polish capital became engulfed in battle, Pilecki at first fought in the rank-and-file of the Chrobry II Home Army unit, but he soon revealed his true rank and became commander of the



**“ON 1 OCTOBER 1990 WITOLD PILECKI WAS FULLY EXONERATED POSTHUMOUSLY. IN 1995, HE WAS AWARDED THE COMMANDER’S CROSS OF THE ORDER OF POLONIA RESTITUTA, AND IN 2006 THE ORDER OF THE WHITE EAGLE”**

*The Warsaw Uprising 1944:  
the heroic battle was  
fought for 63 days*





The communist show trial of Captain Pilecki in March 1948

2nd Company, 1st Battalion. In the first weeks of the uprising his unit continuously fought, and recaptured a vital pressure point in the Warsaw borough of Wola – a pivotal position that hindered the German advance. The place became known as ‘Witold’s Redoubt’.

By mid-August his unit held another strongpoint, the former post office building, defying all German attempts to capture it for six weeks. Following the tragic end of the 63-day heroic battle, Pilecki, along with the rest of the Chrobry II unit, capitulated on 5 October 1944 and were held at the Ozarow camp, before being transported as POWs, first to Lamsdorf and later to Oflag VII-A Murnau.

In April 1945 the US Army liberated Murnau. Pilecki made plans to leave and join the II Corps of the Polish Armed Forces stationed in Italy, where he arrived in July 1945. Stationed at San Giorgio, he met with General Władysław Anders and became an officer in the 2nd Detachment of the Polish Armed Forces in the West. His task was to establish an intelligence ring collecting information on the situation in Poland. Preparing for the assignment, Pilecki, more than anyone, must have understood the danger he faced. He redeployed to Poland on 22

October 1945. Along with his two companions, he reached Warsaw on 8 December 1945.

In Warsaw, he gradually created his own network, selected from former soldiers of the Home Army and the Auschwitz conspiracy. He collected classified information on the terror operations of the NKVD, the Office of Security and on the political and financial cooperations established between Poland’s newly installed Soviet-friendly government and the USSR.

### Beyond bravery

In June 1946, Pilecki obtained an order from General Anders to immediately leave for the West, as communist authorities were closing in on him and his network. But he did not leave. Perhaps he already knew by then that his fate was sealed.

On 8 May 1947, Captain Witold Pilecki was arrested. Subjected to the most brutal torture techniques, this time at the hands of his soviet-trained countrymen, Pilecki’s interrogations were supervised in person by Colonel Józef Rozanski, the head of the MBP/UB (‘Ministry of Public Security’, the post-war communist secret police). When Pilecki’s wife came to visit him in Mokotów prison, he spoke in regards to the torture he was enduring there, and he whispered to her, “Auschwitz was mere child’s play”.

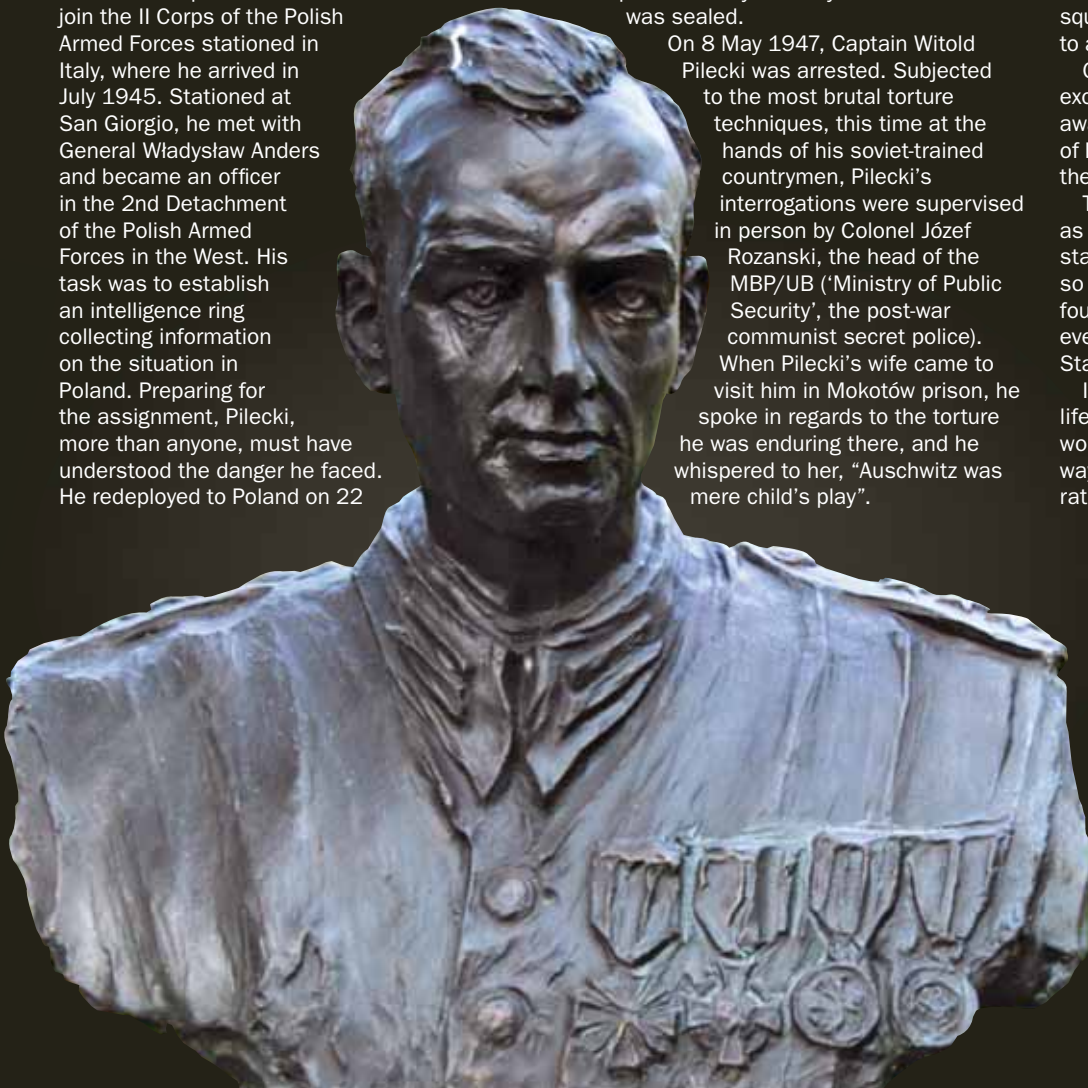
The show trial against Captain Pilecki and his colleagues began on 3 March 1948. Accused of being a traitor and a “Western spy”, Witold Pilecki was declared by the court to be “a paid agent of General Anders’s Intelligence Service”, “betraying state secrets” and for planning armed attacks against the communist secret police. On 15 March Captain Pilecki was sentenced to death.

At 9.30pm on 25 May 1948 Captain Pilecki was executed in the notorious prison at Rakowieczka Street 37, murdered by a bullet shot to the back of his head. His burial place was never revealed, yet his memory lived on. Pilecki’s widow and children continued their appeals for his exoneration. Churches held Mass in his memory. As communism fell, streets, squares and schools named in his honour began to appear.

On 1 October 1990 Witold Pilecki was fully exonerated posthumously. In 1995, he was awarded the Commander’s Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, and in 2006 the Order of the White Eagle.

Today, Captain Witold Pilecki is remembered as the bravest of the brave, and his heroic life stands as a symbol, reflecting the fates of so many of his countrymen and women, who fought for Poland’s freedom and sacrificed everything in the fight against both Nazism and Stalinism alike.

In the end, the best epitaph to Pilecki’s life and extraordinary courage are in his own words: “I have tried to live my life in such a way, so that in the hour of my death I would rather feel joy than fear.”



**“TODAY, CAPTAIN WITOLD PILECKI IS REMEMBERED AS THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE, AND HIS HEROIC LIFE STANDS AS A SYMBOL”**



# THE MICHAEL THE BRAVE

The Wallachian ruler united three principalities while defeating rival princes and Ottoman armies in the turbulent Balkan Peninsula

WORDS WILLIAM E. WELSH

**O**n 13 November 1593, Prince Michael of Wallachia summoned the top Ottoman officials in his realm to a meeting in the capital of Târgoviste, to receive the tribute he owed Sultan Murad III. For many generations the Wallachians had endured the burdens of vassalage to the Ottoman sultans. Michael the Brave, as he would be known to future generations, felt a burning anger at having to bend the knee, so he ordered his bodyguards to slay the Ottoman officials. The killings sparked an orgy of slaughter throughout the principality as Wallachians viciously attacked Ottoman officials, soldiers and settlers. When Murad learned of the massacre, he told Grand Vizier Koca Sinan Pasha to make the Wallachians pay dearly for their treachery.

## The Long War

Following their conquest of Bulgaria in 1393, the Ottomans stepped up their raids into Wallachia. Mircea the Elder, who ruled the principality at that time, had strengthened the fortifications throughout his land in an effort to resist Ottoman aggression. Nevertheless, Sultan Bayezid I compelled his successor, Vlad I, to begin paying annual tribute. In 1462 Sultan Mehmed II went a step further than his predecessors and annexed Wallachia, making it an Ottoman eyalet. The Wallachians needed a charismatic leader with a brilliant military mind to reinvigorate their resistance to the Ottomans. They would have to wait more than a century for one possessing such qualities.

In 1526 the Ottomans won one of their greatest victories when they smashed the Hungarian army at the Battle of Mohács. The Turks annexed two-thirds of Hungary, leaving the rest to the Austrian Habsburg dynasty,

which from that point on possessed the crowns of both Hungary and Bohemia.

By the second half of the 16th century the border between Habsburg Hungary and Ottoman Hungary bristled with fortifications. A large, cross-border raid by Ottoman Bosnians in 1592 drove Habsburg Emperor Rudolf II to declare war the following year. The ensuing conflict lasted for 13 years, hence the name the 'Long War', and consisted mostly of sieges.

Just as the war was heating up, Sultan Murad chose 35-year-old Michael Patrascu of the House of Draculesti to serve as voivode (Slavic for governor, or prince) of Wallachia. Michael ruled the people who lived in the expansive plain between the Transylvanian Alps and the Lower Danube. Although an ethnically diverse area, the majority of his people were Romanian-speaking Vlachs.

Murad fully expected that Michael would support the Ottomans in their war against the Habsburgs. As an Ottoman vassal, Michael was expected to pay annual tribute and furnish troops for Ottoman offensives.

Michael came to power in a treacherous political environment. He was caught in a vice between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. If he were the vassal of one, he would be the enemy of the other. It was a complex game of

**“THE WALLACHIANS NEEDED A CHARISMATIC LEADER WITH A BRILLIANT MILITARY MIND TO REINVIGORATE THEIR RESISTANCE TO THE OTTOMANS”**

political chess fraught with peril. Allies routinely double-crossed each other to save their own skins. This was the case for the voivodes of the smaller states, such as Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia.

## Wallachian offensive

Michael led an army of mounted Wallachians south across the Danube River into Ottoman-held Bulgaria in January 1595. The swift-moving column systematically captured a string of Ottoman strongholds along the Danube, including Ruscium, Silistra, Nicopolis and Chilia. These gains greatly worried the Ottomans because it threatened their supply line along the Lower Danube.

In the meantime, Transylvanian Voivode Sigismund Báthory sought to establish his authority, with Rudolf's approval, over the voivodes of Wallachia and Moldavia. Transylvania historically was part of Hungary, but its ruler often oversaw regional matters on behalf of the Habsburg emperor.

Voivode Aaron of Moldavia dutifully arrived in the Transylvanian capital of Alba Iulia. Báthory imprisoned and poisoned Aaron so that he could install one of his own officials, Stefan Razvan, as ruler of Moldavia. Báthory also summoned Michael, but the Wallachian was busy campaigning against the Ottomans, so he sent a group of Wallachian boyars (aristocratic landowners) to act on his behalf. They signed an agreement whereby Michael became Báthory's vassal.

Michael expected a large Ottoman army to invade Wallachia to restore the disrupted supply line to the war zone in northern Hungary. The Ottomans needed to secure the corridor in order to safely move troops, siege guns, ammunition and food stores to the battlefield

## PRINCE MICHAEL

Prince Michael the Brave of Wallachia wears an embroidered cloak over a blackened cuirass with gold inlay. On his head he wears a traditional Wallachian fur hat with decorative bird feathers on one side. Michael was left-handed, and therefore his left hand rests on his scimitar. In battle, though, he preferred to wield a double-bladed axe. His large, fur-trimmed cloak offered ample warmth. The red lining was inspired by the 16th-century Wallachian flag, which had a black sable eagle with a gold cross in its beak set against a red background.

*Wallachian Prince Michael the Brave as depicted in an early 20th-century mural painting*

**“MICHAEL CAME TO POWER IN A TREACHEROUS POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT. HE WAS CAUGHT IN A VICE BETWEEN THE HABSBURG AND OTTOMAN EMPIRES. IF HE WERE THE VASSAL OF ONE, HE WOULD BE THE ENEMY OF THE OTHER. IT WAS A COMPLEX GAME OF POLITICAL CHESS, FRAUGHT WITH PERIL”**



in Hungary. The Ottomans also wanted to secure Wallachia because they relied on it for grain and horses for their armies.

Sinan Pasha invaded Wallachia in the summer of 1595 with 115,000 troops for the purpose of securing the Ottoman supply corridor along the Lower Danube. To oppose him, Michael had 22,000 Wallachian, Székely and Cossack troops. The native Wallachians and the Cossacks fought mounted, whereas the Székelys fought on foot.

Michael deployed his troops in a strong position on marshy ground behind the Neajlov River, south of the village of Calugareni, to impede the Ottoman akinji and sipahi horsemen. As they advanced against the Wallachians on 25 August, the troops of the Ottoman vanguard ran into stiff resistance while crossing a bridge over the Neajlov.

Once the Ottomans had secured a foothold on the north side of the Neajlov, the janissaries went to work constructing makeshift causeways and bridges through the marshes using logs and planks. When his entire army was on hand, Sinan Pasha attempted a double envelopment with his skilled horsemen.

The Turks never managed to achieve their double envelopment because Michael moved to seize the initiative. He dispatched a portion of his cavalry on a wide flanking move in which it assailed the Ottoman flank and rear. While the cavalry was moving into position, Michael led a spirited attack on the Ottoman centre, wading into the enemy ranks swinging his double-bladed axe. The Ottomans fell back in the face of the fearsome counterattack. The victorious Wallachians seized 15 guns and captured the green banner of the prophet as a trophy.

Unable to further resist the much larger Ottoman army and wanting to avoid destruction, Michael withdrew north across the Wallachian plain to the safety of the primeval woods of the Transylvanian Alps. Sinan Pasha retook the fortress of Giurgiu and then occupied Târgoviste and Bucharest.

Michael requested troops from Báthory, who duly came to his aid. At the head of a 40,000-strong Wallachian-Transylvanian army Michael recaptured Târgoviste on 18 October. Instead of attacking Michael, Sinan Pasha retreated towards the Danube for fear that Michael would cut his supply line. Michael's

troops attacked the Ottomans at Giurgiu on 27 October. The Ottomans, who were withdrawing to the south bank of the Danube over a bridge of boats, had to fight a desperate rearguard action to protect their crossing. Sinan Pasha sacrificed his rearguard in order to get the main body safely across.

### Conquest of Transylvania

Sigismund Báthory was not half the warrior that Michael was. His passion was not the clang of steel in battle, but rather the call of the church. Trained by Jesuits, he was a devout believer in the counter-reformation, and that is where his passion lay. In 1598 he stepped down as voivode, relinquishing his position to his brother Andrew Báthory, Prince-Bishop of Warmia.

Michael had already conjured thoughts of conquest, and decided to invade Transylvania to expand his power and authority. Before doing so, he made an agreement with Emperor Rudolf on 9 June 1598, whereby he would become Rudolf's vassal and receive 5,000 troops to fight the Ottomans. Rudolf also gave his consent for Michael to unseat Andrew Báthory.

Michael led his 24,000-strong army into Transylvania on 5 October 1599. Before launching his attack, Michael had informed the Székelys, who lived in the foothills of the Eastern Carpathian Mountains, that he was entering Transylvania to serve as its governor on behalf of Emperor Rudolf and would grant them broad liberties. As a result, his army

**“SIGISMUND BÁTHORY WAS NOT HALF THE WARRIOR THAT MICHAEL WAS. HIS PASSION WAS NOT THE CLANG OF STEEL IN BATTLE, BUT RATHER THE CALL OF THE CHURCH”**



Michael the Brave and his army arrive at the Transylvanian capital of Alba Iulia

swelled in size with the addition of 12,000 enthusiastic Székelys.

On 18 October Michael clashed with General Gaspar Kornis's Transylvanian army at Selimbar. After smashing Kornis's army, Michael occupied the city of Alba Iulia. A group of Székelys arrived and presented him with the head of Andrew Báthory, having murdered him on their own volition. The swift conquest of Transylvania was one of the high points of Michael's military career.

Michael's favouritism towards the Székelys alienated the Transylvanian boyars. They considered Michael an illegitimate ruler. Dissatisfaction with his rule increased when he raised taxes to pay his war debts.

Seeking more wealth to fund his army, Michael invaded Moldavia to unseat Voivode Jeremiah Movila, a vassal of Poland. On 14 April 1600, several columns of Wallachian troops marched into Moldavia from different routes with orders to converge on the Moldavian capital of Chisinau. Movila sought safety at Khotyn Fortress on the Dniester River, which was on the eastern border of Moldavia. The fortress was held by a strong

## “SEEKING MORE WEALTH TO FUND HIS ARMY, MICHAEL INVADED MOLDAVIA”

Polish garrison, and Michael failed to capture it. Movila entreated with Sigismund III, ruler of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, for assistance in recovering his voivodship.

Although Michael's rule of Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania would last for only five months in the spring and summer of 1600, it was a great feat of dynastic imperialism. The three states would not be joined again until 1918. Michael's achievement would later inspire future generations of nationalists.

### Imperial intervention

Emperor Rudolf eventually decided to curb Michael's power. He sent General Georg Basta with a large mercenary army into Transylvania to take control. Basta allied himself with the disaffected nobility in a quest to oust Michael. The two armies clashed at Miraslau on 18 September 1600. In a hard-fought battle, Basta out-thought Michael by conducting a successful feigned retreat. Afterwards, Michael withdrew south to Wallachia. Basta reinstated Sigismund Báthory – who had decided to



*Above: Transylvanians loyal to Michael bring him the head of Transylvanian prince Andrew Báthory*

*Below: Using captured Ottoman guns to support his men, Michael defeated the Ottomans at Târgoviște in 1595*



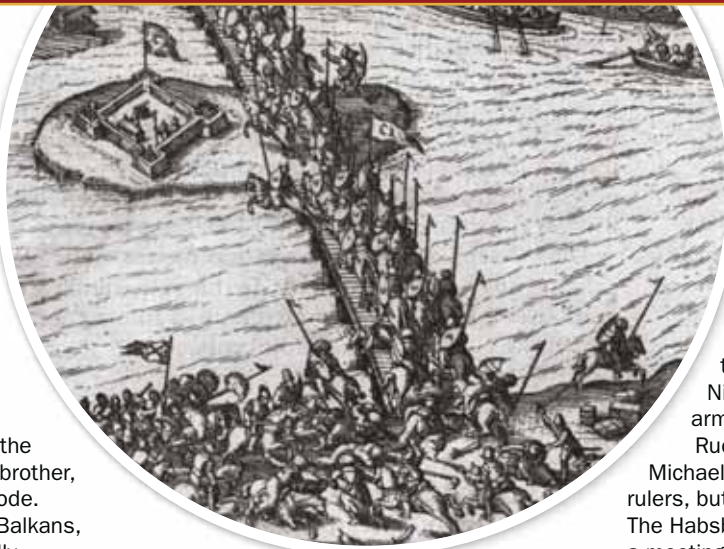
resume his princely office – as voivode of Transylvania.

Meanwhile, Polish Chancellor Jan Zamoyski and Lithuanian Hetman Jan Karol Chodkiewicz invaded Moravia at the head of a Polish-Lithuanian army to restore Movila to his position as Moldavian voivode. Michael marched into Moldavia to do battle, but his Wallachian army was ultimately outmatched and defeated.

The victors pursued Michael into eastern Wallachia. After vanquishing him on 15 November on the banks of the Arges River, they installed Jeremiah's brother, Simon Movila, as the Wallachian voivode. Michael's swift fall was typical of the Balkans, where the small states were continually squeezed by the larger powers that bordered the region.

### Assassination plot

Michael had no choice but to travel to Prague in January 1601 to make a personal appeal to Emperor Rudolf for military assistance to regain control of Wallachia. By that time, Sigismund Báthory had struck a deal with Ottoman Sultan Mehmed III, who had succeeded Murad III, to become his vassal. For



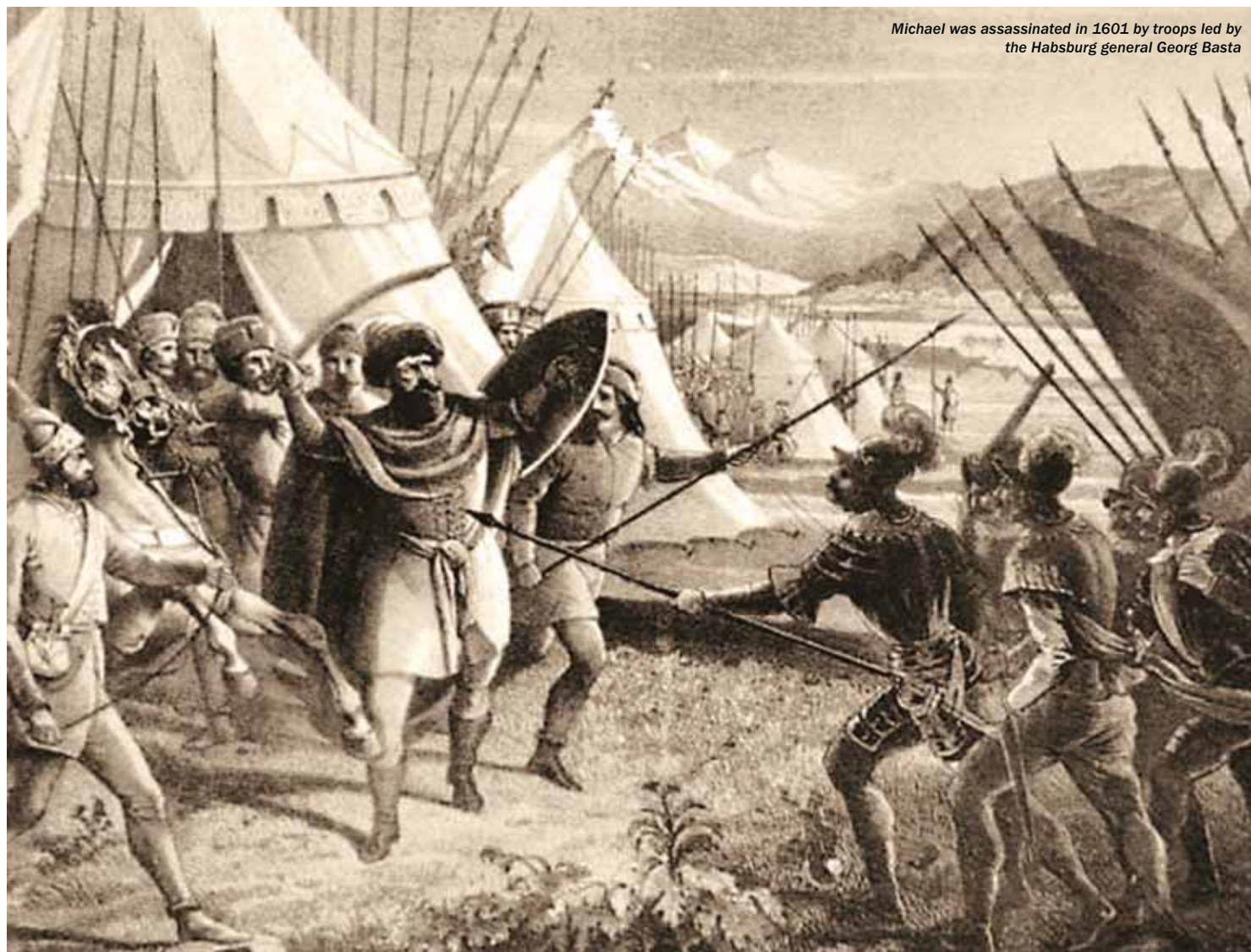
*Left: Michael the Brave and Sigismund Báthory crushed the Ottomans at Giurgiu in October 1595*

this reason, Rudolf was keen to unseat Sigismund Báthory, so he directed Basta to assist Michael in defeating him. In a pitched battle at Goraslau on 3 August, the Habsburg-Wallachian army smashed Báthory. In the intervening time, Michael's 21-year-old son, Nicolae Patrascu, raised a Wallachian army and ousted Simon Movila.

Rudolf had intended that Basta and Michael should rule Transylvania as co-rulers, but Basta secretly despised Michael. The Habsburg general summoned Michael to a meeting at his camp near Cluj. It was a well-laid trap. When the opportunity arose, Basta's troops murdered Michael.

It had never been Michael's intention to unite the Transylvanians, Wallachians and Moldavians in one country, as nationalism was not a strong motivation in his period. He conquered the neighbouring principalities in order to secure his position in Wallachia and to free his people from the grip of the imperious Ottomans. It was ironic that his end came not at the hands of the Ottomans, but those of fellow Christians.

**“MICHAEL'S SWIFT FALL WAS TYPICAL OF THE BALKANS, WHERE THE SMALL STATES WERE CONTINUALLY SQUEEZED BY THE LARGER POWERS”**



*Michael was assassinated in 1601 by troops led by the Habsburg general Georg Basta*

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One of the biggest military defeats in US history took place in the Philippines, where more than 100,000 American and Filipino prisoners were taken by the victorious Japanese in 1942





# FALL OF BATAAN

For three desperate months a battered Allied army held a small peninsula against formidable Japanese firepower. But the valiant defence of Bataan ended in catastrophe

WORDS MIGUEL MIRANDA

## BATAAN PENINSULA, CENTRAL LUZON 6 JANUARY 1942 – 9 APRIL 1942

**T**oughened by years of combat in mainland China, Japan's powerful military was poised to carve up Southeast Asia during the summer of 1941. In June that year the surrender of France to the Nazis emboldened Tokyo's aggression, and Indochina was quickly made a 'protectorate'. Retaliatory sanctions by the US on Japanese oil imports had the opposite effect to that intended, hastening the countdown to total war in the Pacific. Strategists understood that dominating Asia meant seizing the Strait of Malacca on one end together with an archipelagic nation on the other – the Philippines. So the high commands in Tokyo and Washington, DC readied themselves for a mighty struggle.

Even after months of frenzied preparation, the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) was completely unprepared for the Japanese onslaught on Luzon, the Philippines' northernmost landmass. The former Spanish colony had been under American control since the turn of the century. In 1935 it was granted quasi-independence as a 'commonwealth' while garrisoned US forces were responsible for national defence. In the last month of 1941, however, the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur and other highly regarded generals was cast in doubt.

In Clark Field, B-17 bombers and an assortment of fighters were left outside their hangars for a possible pre-emptive strike on Formosa (now called Taiwan), where the most recent intelligence indicated a build-up of Japanese air and naval assets. On the morning of 8 December, just after news of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor reached the USAFFE leadership, bomber formations appeared from nowhere and laid the idle American aircraft to waste. The USAFFE was slow to react, and the Japanese army's air fleets were able to attack first. From that moment on, the sizable US garrison in the Philippines struggled to mount an earnest defence of the entire archipelago.

In the weeks after the raids on Clark Field and nearby Fort Stotsenburg – a barracks for the US Army – Japanese pilots managed to control much of Luzon's airspace, and at least two small-scale amphibious landings were carried out to test local defences. On 22 December a fleet appeared in the Lingayen



*Above: General Masaharu Homma led the 14th Army's invasion of the Philippines. He was the first Asian general to ever defeat a superior American force in a conventional war. Homma was executed by the Allies in 1946, for war crimes*

Gulf carrying General Masaharu Homma's 14th Army. MacArthur's nemesis was atypical in many respects. 1.83 metres (six feet) tall and recognisable for his shaved head, the soft-spoken Homma had studied in Britain and travelled widely. On 17 December 1941 he departed Formosa with his 43,110-strong invasion force, dreading an American counterattack once they reached Luzon. But after a difficult landing in Lingayen, two days went by without meeting serious resistance. In fact, a battery of US 155mm howitzers near Dagupan, the largest town along the Lingayen coast, never fired a shot at the Japanese.

The same farce unfolded again and again in the plains of Central Luzon. On paper, the USAFFE had five impregnable layers of defences buttressed by the Cordillera mountains in the northeast. MacArthur assigned General Jonathan M. Wainwright to command the North Luzon Force that enjoyed the lion's share of artillery and armour – 100 M3 light tanks that had arrived months before. There was also a South Luzon Force, a Harbor Defence Force in Manila, a Far East Air Force, a Visayas-Mindanao Force, a Reserve Force, and the combined strength of the Philippine Scouts and the Philippine Constabulary. The Philippine army was mobilised as well, with a

manpower pool estimated to reach 100,000 men. Unfortunately, in stark contrast to the well-provisioned Americans, Filipino soldiers lacked sufficient firearms, training and uniforms. Not surprisingly, Filipino units fell apart whenever they tried skirmishing with the Japanese, whose soldiers were seasoned in fighting pitched battles.

### WPO-3

As each of the North Luzon Force's hastily prepared defensive lines crumbled in the days following the Lingayen landings, MacArthur decided it was best to concentrate his forces in a last-ditch attempt to hold the Philippines until help arrived. This scenario was known to American commanders as 'War Plan Orange', 'Plan Orange' or simply 'WPO-3', and involved using Luzon's geography to the defender's advantage. Rather than disperse the USAFFE over the jungles and mountains in Luzon's extremities, which is what American-led guerrilla units later did during the occupation years, Plan Orange required a single bastion to withstand a very long siege. For decades, the Bataan Peninsula was the ideal location, since it had been a hideout for insurgents even during the Philippine-American War from 1899 until 1906. Forming the eastern rim of Manila Bay, Bataan's rugged interior was covered in greenery that carpeted its many peaks, foremost being the Mariveles Mountains that offered a superb view of the South China Sea.

Once MacArthur and his staff, along with an ailing Philippine President Manuel L. Quezon, had relocated to the island fortress of Corregidor, which guarded the entrance to Manila Bay, the North Luzon Force fought minor delaying actions until enough supplies reached Bataan. This effort proved wasteful, since nearly all the American tanks and significant numbers of heavy artillery were either abandoned or lost in the process. Entire bases were given up as well, such as the naval depot in Subic Bay and the aerodromes in Clark Field and Nichols Field just outside Manila. Bridges and roads were either dynamited or booby-trapped. Tons of food and fuel were left behind in the rush southward. Sadly, the capital of the Philippines, along with every government building in it, were left as spoils for Homma's 14th Army.

As waves of Japanese bombers dropped ordnance on Corregidor on a daily basis, the Americans and Filipinos seeking shelter in concrete bunkers did what they could to celebrate the holidays. For many it would be the last Christmas and New Year's Eve to enjoy roast turkey, rum punch, canned fruit and maybe a cigar. For most it was the last December without hunger and sickness. But for the thousands of soldiers in the Bataan Peninsula, their misery had just begun.

In the span of just 15 days, what used to be the North Luzon Force fought a delaying action, reorganised its entire structure and established fortifications in the Bataan Peninsula. As the rest of USAFFE's manpower poured in, along with countless refugees, Bataan's territory was reorganised. The peninsula was halved between two new formations, I Corps under General Edward P. King in the west and II Corps under General George M. Parker in the east. Then each corps subdivided its territory into sectors joined by overlapping fortified lines. The main battle position stretched from the town of Mabatang in the east until the town of Mauban in the west. A physical barrier to offensive operations was provided by Mount Natib, whose peak still remained unoccupied.

Several kilometres behind the main position was the rear battle position,

## “SO FLAWLESS WAS THE INFILTRATION THAT IT TOOK A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE AMERICANS ARRIVED IN FORCE TO BLOCK THEM”

covering the lower half of the peninsula. The rear battle position was the last line of defence for the supplies stockpiled in the service command area, which had access to Corregidor via boat from the town of Mariveles.

Homma's 14th Army launched its attack on Bataan a week into the new year, but it soon became bogged down with heavy casualties, as less experienced Japanese army units were thrown into the maelstrom. Now the Filipinos showed their grit. One American veteran, Colonel E.B. Miller, recalled the fighting in his memoir: “Shells, landing in the area, vomited and spewed death and destruction,” Miller recalled. “Jap aircraft bombed and strafed. The din was deafening. The very earth, under our feet, shook with the intensity of the attack... the Scouts turned the tide again with acts of heroism that made history. These were the Scouts who also loved and believed in America!”

### Holding steady

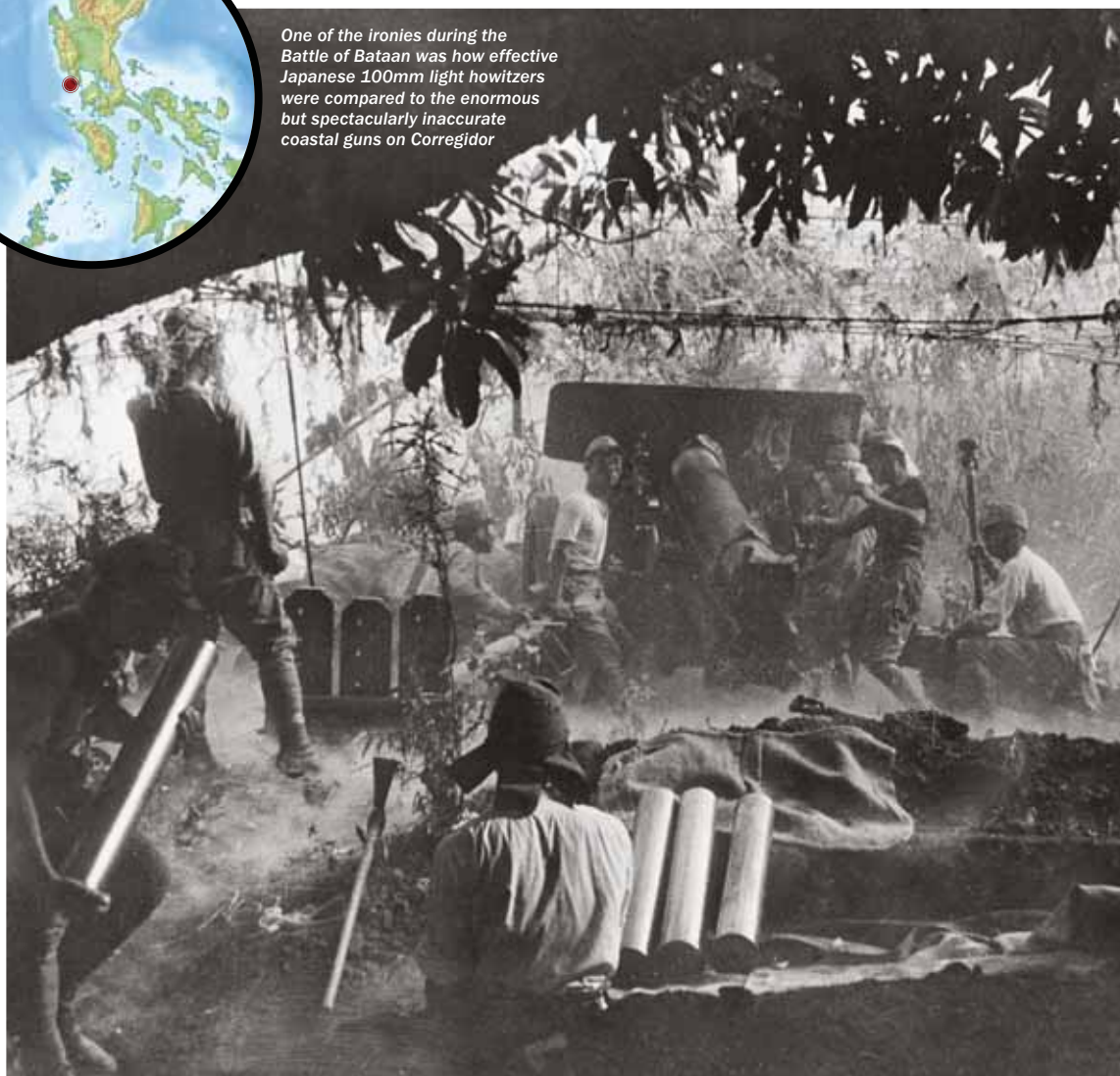
But the initial victories against the Japanese were shortlived. The reality of the situation was that Homma's troops were exhausted from their sprint across Central Luzon, which had a negative effect on their morale. Overly cautious and worrisome, Homma was aware the 40,000 men in his expedition were stretched thin. It didn't help that the Imperial Command Headquarters in Tokyo had mandated a 50-day campaign to subdue the entire Philippines. As the dreaded 50th day neared, Homma approved ever more daring tactics to settle the Bataan conundrum once and for all.

On 23 January three Japanese regiments departed Subic Bay and the coastal town of Moron to launch an attack on Bataan's western flank, which formed part of the service command area. A series of coves became landing areas densely held by Japanese infantry. So flawless was the infiltration that it took a few days before the Americans arrived in force to block them.

Colonel Miller, who led an armoured column at the time, was in the thick of the fighting. “We learned later, that on this same day, a landing had been effected by the Japs on the west of Bataan,” Miller recalled. “We had not known they were in the area. And they did not know that we were in position along this north and south trail.”



One of the ironies during the Battle of Bataan was how effective Japanese 100mm light howitzers were compared to the enormous but spectacularly inaccurate coastal guns on Corregidor



## OPPOSING FORCES



### USAFFE

#### LEADERS:

Gen. Douglas MacArthur  
Maj. Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright  
Maj. Gen. Edward P. King  
Brig. Gen. George M. Parker, Jr.

#### FORCES:

I Corps  
II Corps  
Philippine Scouts  
Philippine Constabulary  
Philippine army

VS



### IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY

#### LEADERS:

Lt. Gen. Masaharu Homma

#### FORCES:

14th Army;  
48th Division  
22nd Field Artillery  
4th Division  
4th Tank Regiment  
7th Tank Regiment

# A USELESS FORTRESS

BRISTLING WITH GUNS AND CANNONS, CORREGIDOR WAS MEANT TO DEFEND MANILA FROM A MARAUDING NAVY. BUT JAPAN'S MULTI-PRONGED ASSAULT ON LUZON LEFT IT REDUNDANT

When the United States began its conquest of the Philippine Islands in 1899, among the more curious spoils taken from Spain's former colonial possession was a rocky islet with a small fort. Situated at the mouth of Manila Bay, no ship could approach the Philippine capital without falling under its gaze. At least this was Corregidor's intended function.

When Commodore George Dewey's squadron of battleships annihilated the Spanish navy off Manila in 1898, for example, Corregidor failed to alert the coastal defences in nearby Cavite of the intruders' presence. Still, the new American administration that governed the Philippines embraced the idea of an impregnable fortress and poured funds into rehabilitating Corregidor.

But as the work dragged on for years the rationale behind Corregidor's purpose seemed stuck in the past. At the end of World War I, when huge leaps in air and naval technology made static defences obsolete, 12-inch M1895 coastal howitzers were placed in Corregidor. Additional batteries of giant mortars were added later.

Soon the amenities on the island rivalled a country club and an elaborate tunnel complex with its own hospital was carved underneath its highest peak to function as a command centre.

As the Spanish Civil War and the Second Sino-Japanese War proved the devastating effectiveness of bombers, anti-aircraft batteries were spread out over Corregidor. In order to withstand a siege, engineers built subterranean munitions stores containing thousands of rounds for artillery, cannons and machine guns.

The strangest improvement on Corregidor was the transformation of an outlying rock named El Fraile (the Friar) into a 'battleship'. A concrete superstructure was built over it resembling a surface combatant. Pivoting 14-inch and 6-inch gun turrets were added and quarters for its crews had enough supplies to last weeks. The oddity known as 'Fort

**"THE AMENITIES ON THE ISLAND RIVALLED A COUNTRY CLUB AND AN ELABORATE TUNNEL COMPLEX WITH ITS OWN HOSPITAL WAS CARVED UNDERNEATH ITS HIGHEST PEAK"**

Drum' was meant to make Corregidor even deadlier. Coastal outposts were built along the rim of Manila Bay to complete a multi-layered defensive grid.

Much to the dismay of the US commanders in the Philippines, Japan launched its invasion with an overwhelming aerial bombardment, and the landings at Lingayen Gulf far to the north meant Corregidor was little use in the actual fighting. Once War Plan Orange came into effect on 24 December the island fortress became the last bastion for the USAFFE leadership and the Philippine government, who had abandoned Manila as an 'open city'.

As the Battle of Bataan raged on for months, Corregidor provided an umbrella over the USAFFE holdouts, lobbing shells day and night at General Homma's forces. It's unclear how effective this bombardment was because there are no reliable accounts listing Japanese casualties from artillery fire. Truly disappointing were the anti-aircraft guns on Corregidor, which didn't have the range to hit the Japanese bombers that swept over Luzon.

None of Corregidor's defences managed to beat a determined amphibious landing by the Japanese army on 5 May. The total surrender of the island took place the following day. Just like in Singapore, the elaborate weaponry on Corregidor failed to serve its purpose.

Battery Cheney, a gun emplacement on Corregidor, part of the island's powerful defences



The curious Fort Drum was a heavily armed 'concrete battleship' south of Corregidor



The ruins left on Corregidor, along with a memorial to American servicemen



By 1941, Corregidor had a total of 23 artillery batteries installed. These included 12-inch, 10-inch, 8-inch, 6-inch guns and 155mm howitzers, with cavernous magazines located in underground bunkers





**01 THE PERILOUS PEAKS**

With the Japanese 14th Army steam-rolling down the plains of Central Luzon in late December, War Plan Orange comes into effect and the Bataan Peninsula is fortified, with its mountains serving as natural barriers.

**02 CORREGIDOR HQ**

On 23 December General MacArthur decides to abandon Manila and relocate USAFFE's HQ to Corregidor. The underground bunkers in the Malinta Tunnel serve as the command and control nexus for General Wainwright's orchestration of the battle for Bataan.

**03 MAIN BATTLE POSITION**

The defence-in-depth strategy for Bataan involves layers of trenches. The main battle position immediately comes under attack on 6 January, but General Homma's exhausted forces are repulsed. The main battle position's 'wings' would finally collapse by 4 April.

**04 REAR BATTLE POSITION**

The secondary defensive layer, or rear battle position, is manned by rear echelon units and reserves meant for reinforcing the main battle position. During the 3 April offensive, however, it too would be broken by Japanese forces.

Great Battles

FALL OF  
**BATAAN**



Above: An American tank attacks a Japanese roadblock during the struggle for the Philippines

Miller's account of the ensuing combat is valuable for its description of a tank versus infantry battle in Southeast Asia. "They far outnumbered us, but for the present, we had the advantage in armor plate," he wrote. Miller's description of the encounter barely concealed his enthusiasm for the fight: "Our self-propelled mounts (half tracks with 75mm guns) could not have been placed in a better position for the action, had we been there in daylight, and planned it a long time before."

He also illustrated the value of the M3 light tanks in Bataan, where they functioned as mobile pillboxes: "In every available place along the entire line, wherever cover was afforded in which there might be Japs, they [self-propelled mounts] dropped their shells. The result was astonishing. The [Japanese] poured out like fleas off a dog. As they appeared, they were picked off by the tankers."

What became known as the 'Battle of the Points' failed, and Homma's exhausted 14th Army ceased major combat operations for the rest of February. For a time, it seemed Bataan's defenders had reason to be optimistic and the worst they could expect was a torrent of propaganda leaflets dropped by Japanese planes. Meanwhile, Homma received fresh manpower and supplies. The elite 4th Division led by Lieutenant General Kenzo Kitano arrived from Shanghai, together with an artillery regiment from Hong Kong. An additional 60 medium bombers flew into Luzon to cement Japanese air superiority. As a dull stalemate settled over Bataan, hunger and disease began to take its toll. The stocks of food were rapidly diminishing and American servicemen suffered as a result. The Filipinos fared a little better, since they knew how to scavenge around the countryside for sustenance. A peculiar feature of the Bataan siege was how the Americans, after four decades stationed in the Philippines, couldn't wean themselves off canned food.

Unknown to the famished defenders was MacArthur's plans for a covert exit from the theatre. As soon as a seriously ill President Quezon was evacuated from Corregidor by submarine and brought to Australia, preparations were underway for MacArthur's own departure. On 12 March the general and his family, accompanied by his staff, boarded four PT boats and set course for Mindanao. After two days at sea the retinue arrived in the sprawling plantation owned by Del Monte, the fruit company, to await their extraction via plane from Australia. Command of all operations in the Philippines was to be directed by General Wainwright, who was placed in charge of the newly minted United States Armed Forces in the Philippines, or USAFIP.

**Surrender and the 'Death March'**

The hammer fell on the morning of 3 April. Japanese howitzers and mortars opened up on the main battle position's northeastern sector and were soon joined by medium bombers of the 22nd Air Brigade. The pounding lasted until noon, and brush fires sent tongues of fire twirling in the hellish smoke. Infantry, supported by medium tanks, broke through two demoralised Filipino

**05 PARKER'S II CORPS**  
Totalling 32,600 men, the II Corps controls the eastern half of the Bataan Peninsula and bears the brunt of Japanese air and artillery bombardment. Its force structure combines American and Filipino divisions.

**06 KING'S I CORPS**  
I Corps is tasked with protecting the Bataan Peninsula's western half. Its divisions have to make do with less, as much of their equipment has been lost in pitched battles across the plains of Central Luzon.

**07 ATTACK FROM THE SEA**  
On 23 January, General Homma directs his best troops to launch an amphibious attack on the Bataan Peninsula's western shore. Sailing from Subic Bay, these forces land on three coves and get bogged down by intense machine gun fire.

**08 A TOWN CALLED MORON**  
The coastal town of Moron is used as a staging area throughout the struggle for Bataan. The amphibious landings in late January are launched from here.

**09 MOUNT SAMAT**  
On 4 April the 14th Army's divisions have broken II Corps and reached Mount Samat. With his command in disarray and supplies running short, General King negotiates a surrender on 9 April, ending the struggle for Bataan.

Map: Battlefield Design



divisions, which triggered a wholesale collapse of II Corps. Japanese officers had Mount Samat in sight within a day and a half.

Knowing that Bataan was lost, General King informed his staff that he would reach out to the Japanese the next morning. Under no circumstances was his superior, General Wainwright, who had vainly ordered a counteroffensive, to be informed of this. Accompanied by his aides, King travelled to the Japanese lines around Mount Samat and requested an audience. King was informed that dialogue was only possible with the highest ranking Japanese officers at the front – Major General Kamaehiro Nagano along with Colonel Matoo Nakayama.

The single photograph that emerged from this minor drama immortalised the anguish of the American defeat. In it, Colonel Everett

Williams's discomfort is apparent as he covers his face. Next to him is a stoic King sitting ramrod straight and cross-legged, his face creased with exhaustion. Behind King, two majors squirm in their seats. The impromptu conference lasted a mere hour, and Bataan was finally lost at midday. Later that evening a Filipino officer recited a sombre memorial on the *Voice of Freedom*, a daily radio broadcast from Corregidor. Second Lieutenant Norman Reyes's words were meant to emphasise the nobility of sacrifice, and this spin on an unimaginable defeat is still used by American and Filipino historians who revisit the fall of Bataan: "The world will long remember this epic struggle that Filipino and American soldiers put up in the jungle fastness and along the rugged coast of Bataan," Reyes intoned with almost religious fervour.

*Above, left: Few images captured Japan's triumph in the Philippines better than their exultant swords-held-high bravado once Corregidor was subdued. For a brief moment, theirs was the strongest army Asia had seen*

*Above, right: With their lines broken and ammo, food and water dwindling, General King had no choice but to negotiate a final surrender. Corregidor succumbed 30 days later in one of the lowest points in US military history*

## “THE LESSONS OF BATAAN SHOULD NEVER BE FORGOTTEN. IT WAS THE COSTLIEST MILITARY DEFEAT EVER SUFFERED BY THE US MILITARY IN A MODERN CONFLICT”



*Dozens of memorials can be found throughout the Philippines commemorating the country's ordeal in WWII. A monument to the fall of Bataan lists the names of those who perished during the 'Bataan Death March'*

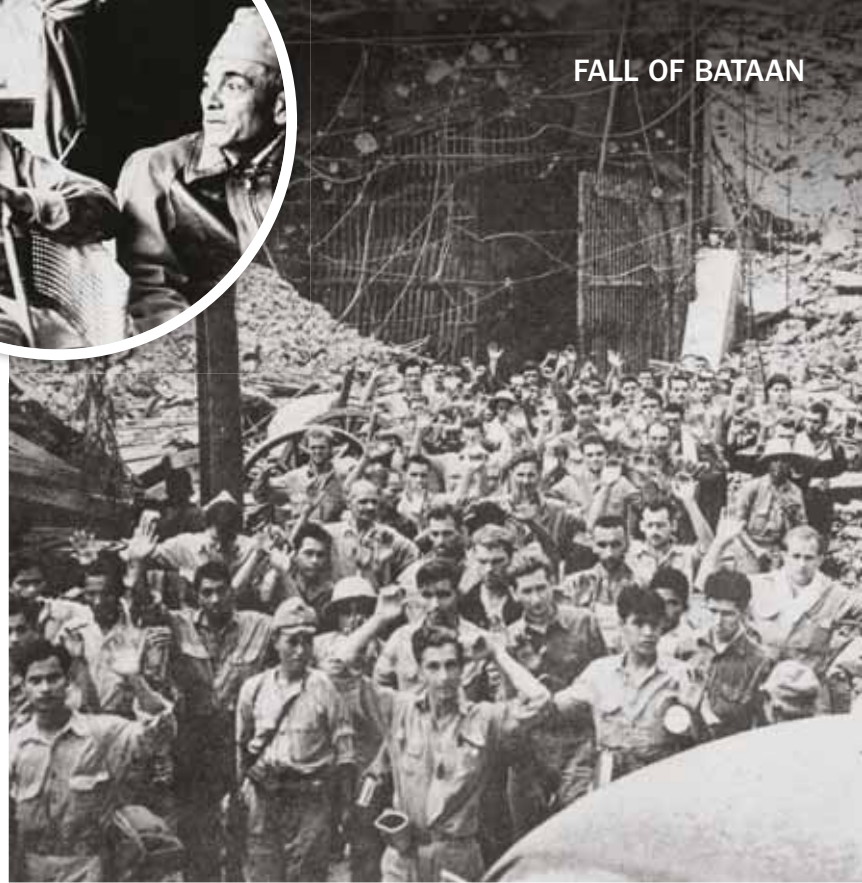
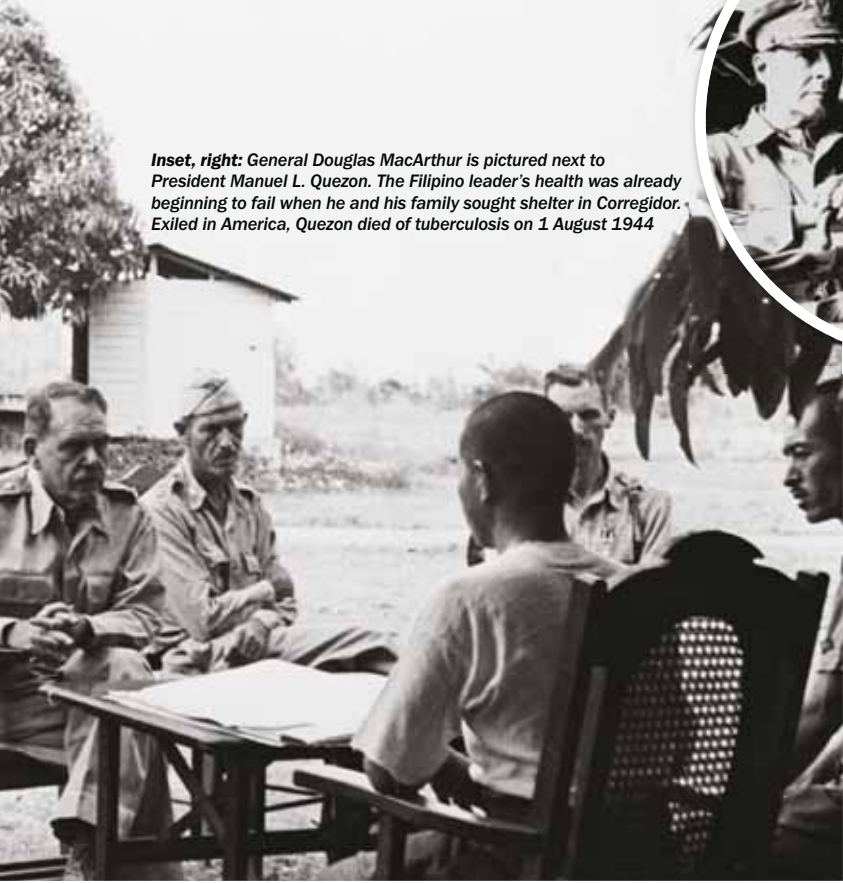
"For what sustained them through all these months of incessant battle was a force that was more than merely physical," Reyes told his listeners. "It was the force of an unconquerable faith – something in the heart and soul that physical hardship and adversity could not destroy!"

The sudden panic that accompanied the fall of Bataan meant Corregidor's population swelled, as several thousand stragglers sought refuge in the bomb-ravaged island. In an effort to vacate the battle area with utmost haste, the Japanese assembled the prisoners of war for a long trek. It was imperative to incarcerate them as soon as possible, but the makeshift prison in Camp O'Donnell was more than 100 kilometres (62 miles) away in Pampanga.

The journalist Russell Brines recalled how much the prisoners suffered during the exodus from Bataan. "All Manila knew what happened in Bataan after the capitulation," Brines wrote in his memoir. "The decapitation of men found with Japanese souvenirs; the murder of wounded and sick soldiers unable to keep up with the straggling columns in the... march to Pampanga; the burial alive of some of them; the refusal to give food and water to the starving and the thirsty; the beatings and the torture; the 'sun treatment'; then later the forced labour of sick and weakened men... the beating and killing of those who tried to escape... thousands of deaths from disease for which there were neither medicines nor even primitive hospital facilities."

It was three years before MacArthur took his revenge as commander of the South West

*Inset, right: General Douglas MacArthur is pictured next to President Manuel L. Quezon. The Filipino leader's health was already beginning to fail when he and his family sought shelter in Corregidor. Exiled in America, Quezon died of tuberculosis on 1 August 1944*



*Above: A month after the surrender in Bataan, another 10,000 Americans went into captivity after General Homma's forces launched a successful air and ground assault on Corregidor*

## THE DEATH MARCH



Pacific Area. In February 1945 he beheld the ruins of liberated Manila and watched paratroopers retake Corregidor and root out Japanese diehards. At the end of the war Masaharu Homma, who had been discharged from the military, was arrested and brought back to the Philippines. He stood trial in Manila as the 'Beast of Bataan' with sole responsibility for the Bataan Death March. He was executed by firing squad on 3 April 1946.

### Lessons learned

After the war, Bataan was either remembered as a testament to the Filipino-American alliance or as a sterling example of American heroism and sacrifice in a faraway land. What was less emphasised, of course, was the suffering imposed on those left behind after the battle.

But the lessons of Bataan should never be forgotten. It was the costliest military defeat ever suffered by the US military in a modern conflict. While the debacle at Kasserine Pass in February 1943 is often remembered as an infamous setback against the Axis powers, the loss of the Philippines took a greater toll. In terms of casualties, several thousand Americans and perhaps three times as many Filipinos were killed during the struggle for Luzon. The surrender of Bataan and Corregidor a month apart meant as many as 80,000 prisoners of war were condemned to endure years of brutal captivity and privation, and it's speculated 20,000 of them died as a result.

The material losses in Bataan, as well as the rest of the Philippines, were severe. Lost to the Japanese were more than 100 tanks and just as many armoured vehicles; 200 combat aircraft; several hundred artillery pieces; tons of fuel and spare parts stockpiled in Luzon's military bases. 17 million Filipinos suffered under the yoke of Japanese rule. To cite other reversals in subsequent wars, such as the Chosin Reservoir in Korea or the siege of Khe Sanh in Vietnam, is moot. These are skirmishes compared to

the knockout punch the Japanese army landed on the USAFFE and the USAFIP in 1942. If there are lessons to be learned from Bataan, a few valuable insights stand out. Foremost is the importance of adequate preparation. The Philippine Commonwealth already had a National Defence Act in 1935 that mandated a standing army. Yet it wasn't until 1941 that the army was properly organised under American leadership.

The failure of intelligence-gathering is another underlying fault. Despite evidence of Japanese preparations, USAFFE didn't anticipate an attack on Luzon. A less apparent factor that contributed to American defeat was the quality of its arsenal. Soldiers were equipped with kit from World War I, including Enfield rifles that were no longer mass produced. The artillery on Corregidor dated to the late 19th century. Except for the P-40B Warhawk, the Far East Air Force flew inadequate aircraft against the Japanese air fleets that descended on Luzon.

Understanding the tragedy of defeat matters, because its lessons are essential for upholding peace in troubled times. With the risk of war among the modern great powers still haunting the Asia-Pacific region, the fall of Bataan should serve as a stark reminder to never underestimate one's enemy.

### FURTHER READING

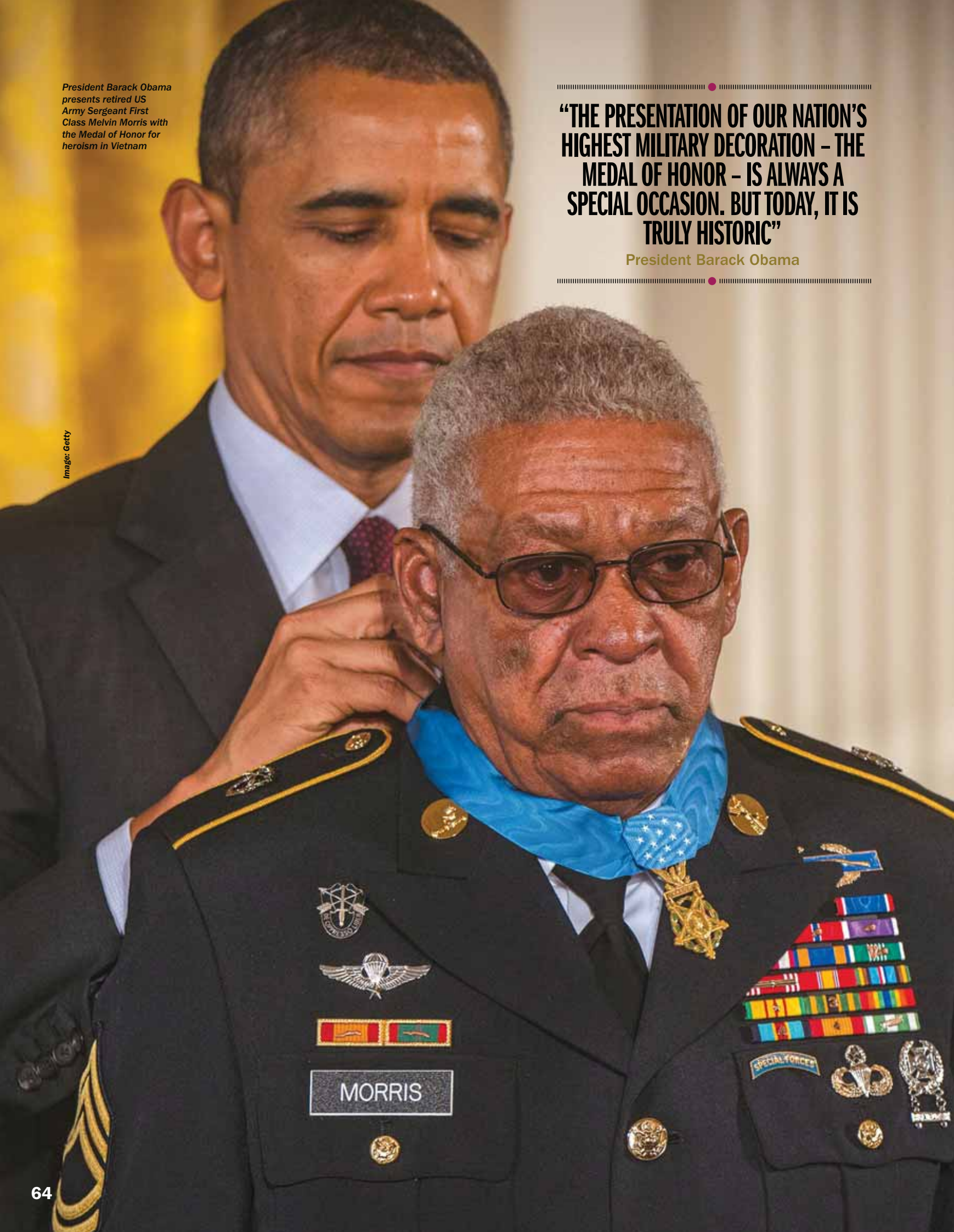
- 📖 *Bataan: The Judgement Seat* by Allison Ino
- 📖 *Bataan Uncensored* by Col. E.B. Miller
- 📖 *Defense Of The Philippines To The Battle Of Buna: A Critical Analysis Of General Douglas MacArthur* by Lt. Col. Laurence M. Jones
- 📖 *The Fall Of The Philippines* by Louis Morton
- 📖 *Let Them Eat Stones* by Russell Brines

President Barack Obama presents retired US Army Sergeant First Class Melvin Morris with the Medal of Honor for heroism in Vietnam

“THE PRESENTATION OF OUR NATION’S HIGHEST MILITARY DECORATION – THE MEDAL OF HONOR – IS ALWAYS A SPECIAL OCCASION. BUT TODAY, IT IS TRULY HISTORIC”

President Barack Obama

Image: Getty







## Heroes of the Medal of Honor

# MELVIN MORRIS

Living up to the Green Beret credo of ‘no man left behind’, this former Sergeant risked his life to recover the body of a fallen comrade during an ambush in Vietnam

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

**M**elvin Morris was astonished when he answered the telephone. The 72-year-old decorated combat veteran had retired from the US Army nearly 30 years earlier and was living quietly in Cocoa, Florida. The voice on the other end belonged to an army colonel, who said that a high-ranking government official wanted to speak to him.

Immediately, Morris thought something dreadful was about to happen. He envisioned government agents at his front door, threatening some dire consequence for a mysterious offence. Although his initial reaction was one of concern, the news he received a short time later was startling.

The telephone rang again, and the familiar voice of the colonel asked Morris to hold a moment for that high-ranking official. Then, on the other end of the line came the unmistakable voice of President Barack Obama, who informed the army veteran that he would be receiving the Medal of Honor, an upgrade on the nation's second-highest medal for courage in the face of the enemy, the Distinguished Service Cross. The president made Morris promise to keep the news secret until all arrangements for the ceremony were completed. Thinking the whole conversation might actually have been a hoax, Melvin called the colonel back. “Is this for real?” he asked. “Am I really getting the Medal of Honor?” The colonel confirmed that the call was indeed “for real” and reminded the stunned former soldier to keep it quiet, even from family,

until he was authorised to talk. “I fell to my knees. I was shocked,” Morris remembered.

Melvin Morris had always wanted to be a soldier. As a boy growing up in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, he had seen relatives in uniform and decided at an early age that a military career was for him. He joined the Oklahoma Army National Guard in 1959 and then opted to enter the regular army. When President John F. Kennedy gave a boost to the expansion of the army special forces and endorsed their distinctive headgear, Morris was one of the first to become a ‘Green Beret’, qualifying for the elite force in 1961. He volunteered twice to serve in Vietnam, at the height of the bloody, protracted war.

On the afternoon of 17 September 1969, Staff Sergeant Morris was with a detachment of advisors from Company D, 3rd Battalion, IV Mobile Strike Force, 5th Special Forces Group, assisting civilian irregular defence forces near the South Vietnamese village of Chi Lang. “And that mission was to search and destroy,” he later explained. “In other words, to hunt the enemy. Destroy his equipment and destroy his supply points, his caches. A tough unit, you know that is what we did on a weekly basis. They did not come to us; we came to them. And you know with this training experience I had, you always had a fear factor, but I was not afraid or scared. No. You cannot do your job if you are scared or afraid, but fear is built in all of us that keeps us on guard.”

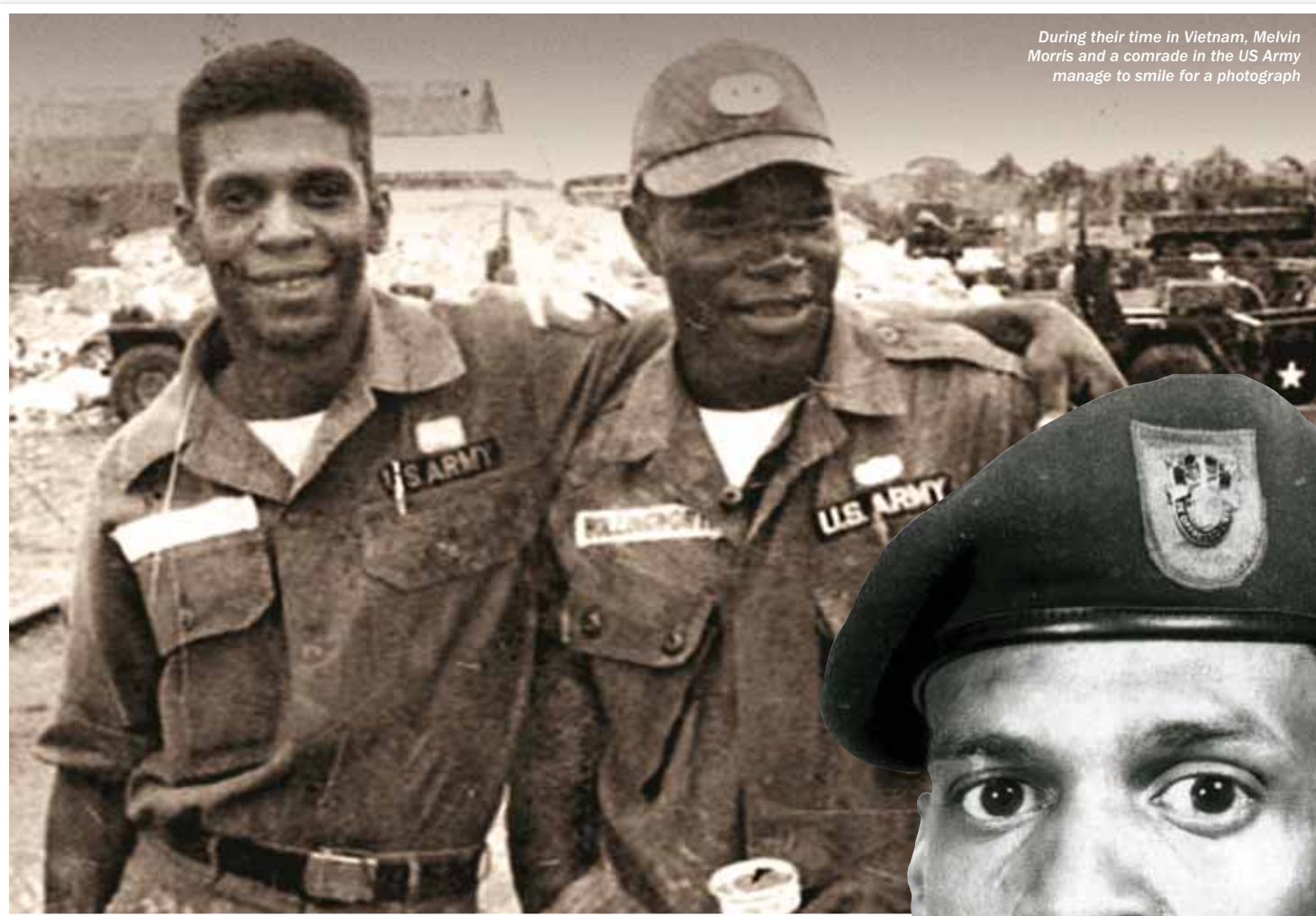
At first the mission was uneventful, but the prospect of an encounter with the North

Vietnamese was always a possibility – an enemy ambush could strike like lightning. Alert and ready for action, Morris recalled proceeding warily. “We moved out that day, moving across a rice field,” he later said. “We came to the village. An old lady was singing, and there was no activity in the village.”

The silence was deafening, and Staff Sergeant Morris knew in his gut that an ambush was coming. The force encountered an enemy minefield, and soon the sound of gunfire was heard in the distance. The radio crackled with the unwelcome news that a sergeant leading up ahead with the team had been killed. More gunfire was heard, and two more soldiers were soon wounded.

“There were only five of us advisors; two were wounded and one killed,” he recalled. “I knew I had to go and recover his body. You just don’t leave a soldier behind. So all three of them were down, and that left me and my young assistant, who had just gotten in the country by about maybe two weeks. No experience as far as combat was concerned, but, you know, I ignore that factor because he is in it now and he has got to step up, and so did I. So we moved out and we reached the area where our teams were, and we were taking quite a bit of fire. So... my job was to find the team sergeant’s body and recover it because we have a motto; you leave no brother behind – as special forces we are strict with that.”

Morris asked for volunteers to go into harm’s way and recover the body of the dead soldier. Two other men were willing, and the trio moved



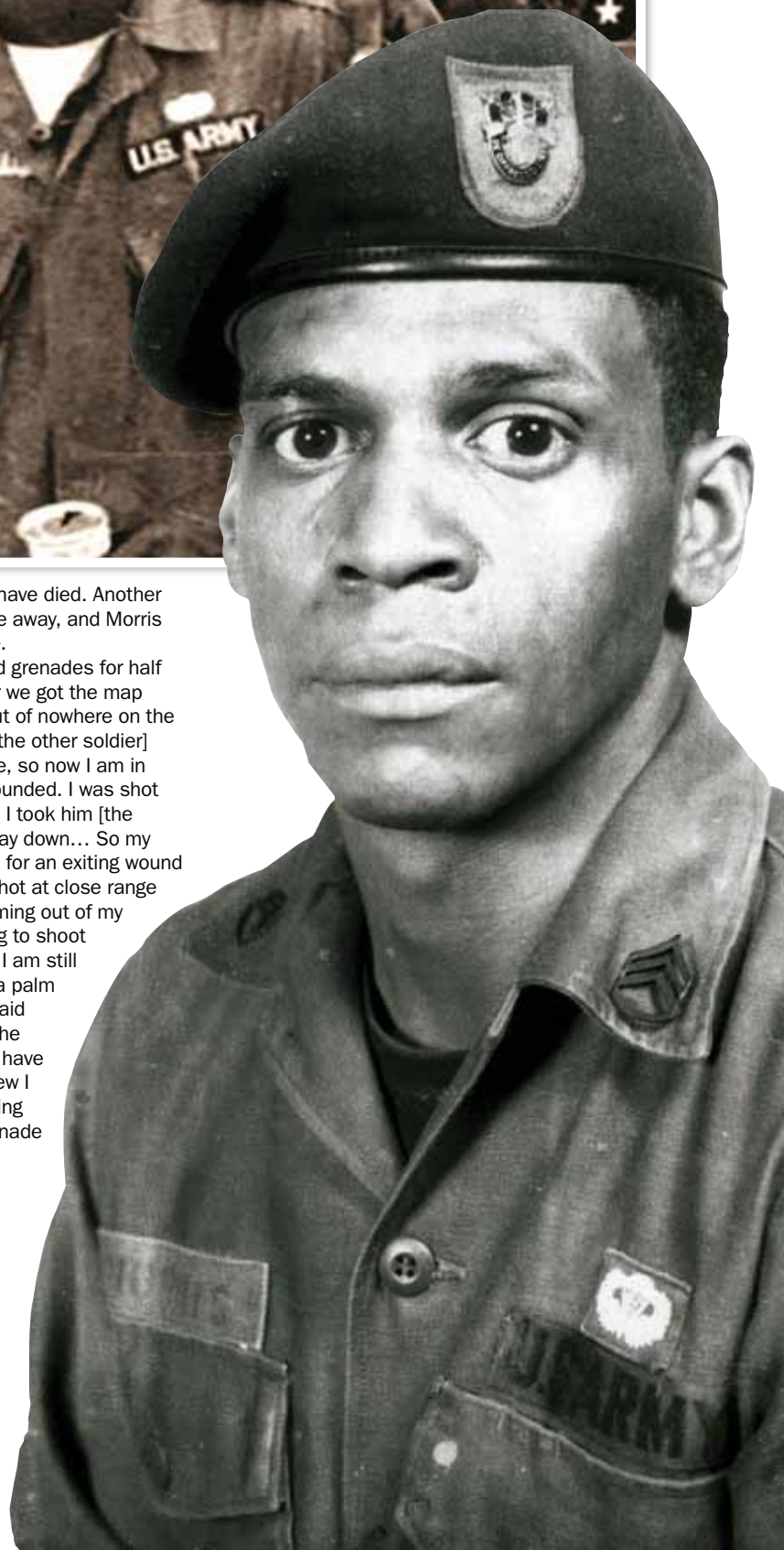
During their time in Vietnam, Melvin Morris and a comrade in the US Army manage to smile for a photograph

ahead. However, these two brave volunteers were soon both wounded. After helping the two wounded men to safety, Morris turned to J.C. Glynn, a medic who had come along on the mission. "He said, 'Doc, I'm going to get him,'" Glynn remembered. "Nobody goes into war thinking they are going to be a hero."

Grabbing two bags of hand grenades, Morris leaped towards the enemy again. He silenced the nearest bunker with the explosives and continued forward as suppressing fire from his men provided some limited cover. As he approached the spot where his comrade's lifeless body lay, Morris continued tossing grenades into enemy bunkers, destroying three more as he reached the body, and he began to carry it back towards his own men, along with a case that contained maps with troop dispositions and other valuable information clearly marked. Had the enemy taken possession of the maps, the security of American and South Vietnamese positions in the area would have been compromised,

and many more men might have died. Another soldier carried the map case away, and Morris continued to fight for his life.

"I must have thrown hand grenades for half an hour," Morris said. "After we got the map case, as an enemy came out of nowhere on the right... he shot me. Treper [the other soldier] was gone with the map case, so now I am in there by myself and I am wounded. I was shot right through the chest, and I took him [the enemy soldier] out on the way down... So my first instinct... was to check for an exiting wound in my back because I was shot at close range and I could see bubbles coming out of my chest. Now they're still going to shoot me. They still want me, and I am still moving. So I got up behind a palm tree, and I grabbed my first aid packet, and I patched it to the hole in my chest... I did not have a hole in the back, and I knew I was good... They started firing at me, and so I had one grenade



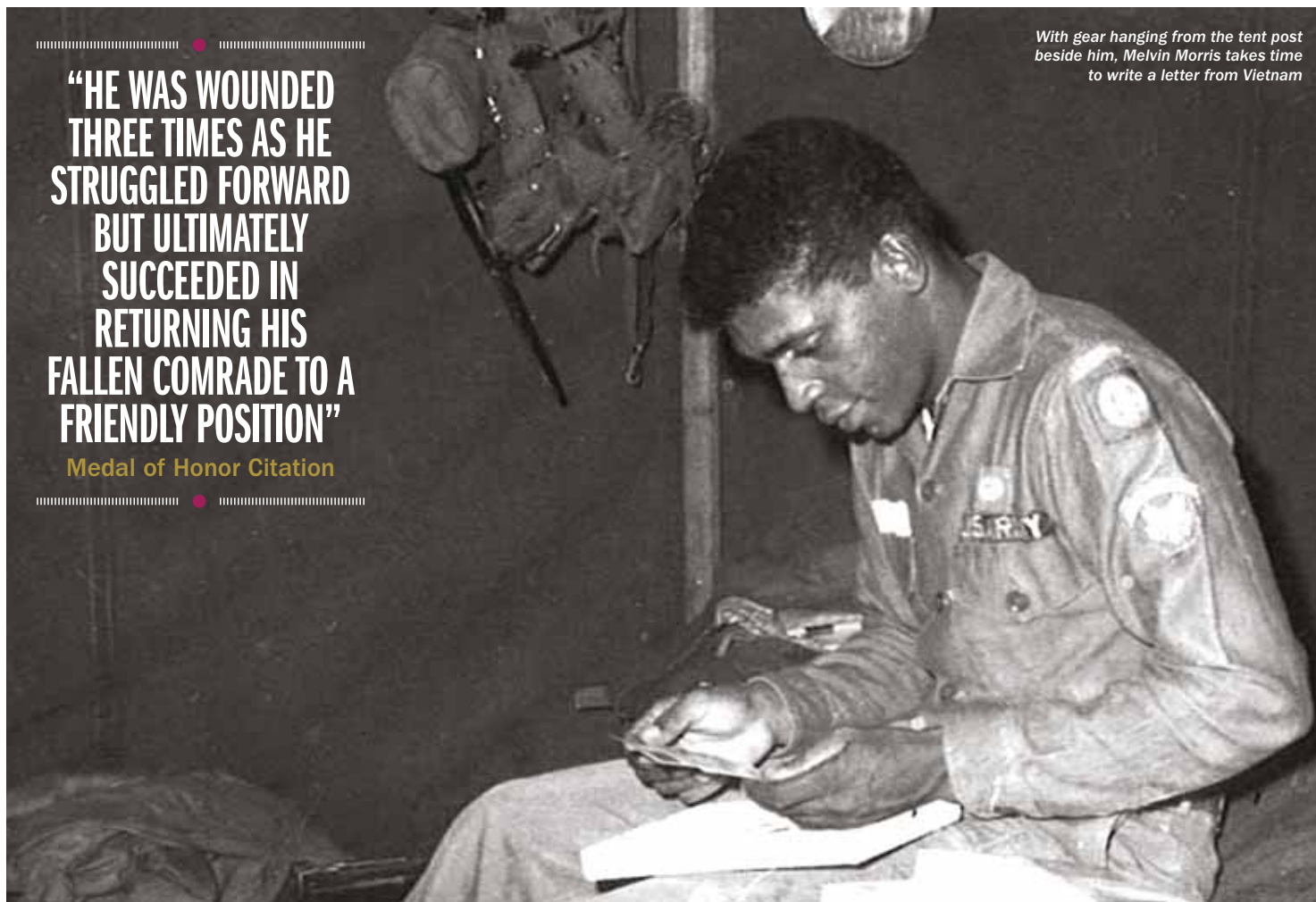
**"I SAID, 'WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO DO IS ROLL OVER AND GET THEIR WEAPON AND START FIRING!' AND THAT IS WHAT I DID"**

**Sergeant Melvin Morris**

“HE WAS WOUNDED  
THREE TIMES AS HE  
STRUGGLED FORWARD  
BUT ULTIMATELY  
SUCCEEDED IN  
RETURNING HIS  
FALLEN COMRADE TO A  
FRIENDLY POSITION”

Medal of Honor Citation

With gear hanging from the tent post beside him, Melvin Morris takes time to write a letter from Vietnam



left, and I threw that at one enemy to my left... I had seen him blow up, and during that time I got shot again because I came out from behind a palm tree. I got back behind the palm tree, and they were shooting right into it. So now I am hit in the right arm..."

As he moved closer to his own line, Morris was wounded a third time. A bullet struck his left hand, and the ring finger was left hanging only by shredded flesh. He thought about just pulling it from his hand and throwing it away, but then decided against that desperate measure.

Through it all, he managed to bring the dead sergeant's body along with him.

Seriously wounded, Sergeant Morris was later medevaced (medically evacuated) from the scene of the ambush. He spent weeks recovering in hospitals in Vietnam and Japan and was transferred to Fort Bragg, North Carolina,

*Left: Melvin Morris served with the Green Berets and volunteered for two tours of Vietnam during the brutal conflict*

where he was expected to be admitted to Womack Army Medical Center. Morris, however, would have none of it. "I refused to go," he said. "I went back to work. I took a little convalescence with my family, and I went back to work!" He volunteered for a second tour in Vietnam, even though he had not fully recovered from his wounds, because he hadn't "finished [the] job" in Vietnam.

About the time he received orders to return to Vietnam, Morris discovered that he was to receive the Distinguished Service Cross for his valour on 17 September 1969. The ceremony took place in April 1970. He went on to receive a Bronze Star along with two Purple Hearts and the coveted Combat Infantryman Badge, among many other awards for his service. Morris retired at Fort Hood, Texas, in May 1985, with the rank of sergeant first class after 26 years of service in the US Army and National Guard.

Still bearing the scars and lingering physical effects of his wounds, Morris got on with his life with his wife Mary, who had raised their three children while Morris was deployed in Vietnam and elsewhere. She had prayed every day for his safe return and remained his wife for more than half a century. Morris's experience in Vietnam remained vivid in his memory.

33 years after Melvin Morris's heroic and desperate afternoon under intense fire in Vietnam, the US Congress authorised the Department of Defense to reassess approximately 6,500 incidents of performance beyond the call of duty during World War II, the

Korean War and the Vietnam War. The impetus for the reevaluation was the possibility that acts of heroism that were actually deemed worthy of the Medal of Honor might have been withheld from service personnel because of racial or ethnic prejudice, resulting in the award of a lower-grade decoration.

During the 12-year assessment period only 24 awards from the thousands reviewed were deemed worthy of upgrades to the Medal of Honor. Of these, only three heroes were still living. Retired Sergeant First Class Melvin Morris was one of them.

Morris received his life-changing telephone call in 2014. "I want to apologise to you for your not getting the Medal of Honor 44 years ago," President Obama told the astounded veteran. Morris received the Medal of Honor along with 23 other living and deceased recipients during a ceremony at the White House on 18 March that year. His citation read in part, "Upon reaching the bunker nearest the fallen team commander Staff Sergeant Morris repulsed the enemy, retrieved his comrade and began the arduous trek back to friendly lines."

Although grievously wounded, Melvin Morris had seen his duty clearly, risked his life against long odds, accomplished the task at hand and kept the faith with the long line of Green Berets before and after him. And his nation had finally righted an injustice almost a half century later when the president of the United States fastened the pale blue ribbon of the Medal of Honor around Morris's neck.

# GLOSTER METEOR **FR.9**

The Gloster Meteor was Britain's first jet fighter, entering service in 1944

This aircraft was the tactical reconnaissance version of the RAF's first jet fighter, and saw service in Europe and the Middle East

WORDS STUART HADAWAY

## CRAMPED COCKPIT

The cockpit of the Meteor was cramped and crowded. Ejecting could be hazardous, with lots of ways to get cut or even break bones.

## NOSE SECTION

The only major design change in the FR.9 was the camera compartment, with multiple windows for aiming the equipment.

The Gloster Meteor FR.9 was one of the final versions of the RAF's first jet fighter, which had originally entered service in July 1944. The aircraft had come a long way in a short time. When it entered service in 1950, the FR.9 had engines that were twice as powerful as the original Meteor, and it could go half as fast again.

The FR.9 was intended to replace the Supermarine Spitfire FR.18, as the RAF moved towards an all-jet front line. After an incredibly short design and acceptance process, the first

## GLOSTER METEOR FR.9

**COMMISSIONED:** 1950 **ORIGIN:** BRITISH  
**LENGTH:** 13.6M (44FT 7IN) **RANGE:** 1,110KM  
 (684MI) **ENGINE:** 2 X 1,587KG (3,500LB)  
**THRUST:** ROLLS-ROYCE DERWENT 8  
**PRIMARY WEAPON:** 4 X HISPANO MK. V  
**20MM CANNON:** 1

**“THE FR.9 WAS INTENDED TO REPLACE  
 THE SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE FR.18,  
 AS THE RAF MOVED TOWARDS AN  
 ALL-JET FRONT LINE”**

### OLD-FASHION DESIGN

The Meteor was unimaginative in design, without the radical lines of some contemporary jet aircraft. However, this sped up testing and production.

### SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE AIRFRAME

The Meteor's classic monocoque airframe was old-fashioned in some ways, but it was simple, easy to produce and versatile.

production models entered service just months after the first prototype flew. It was quickly introduced in Europe to support the growing forces gathering to oppose the Soviets, as well as in the Middle East, where Britain was facing growing tensions in Egypt and the Persian Gulf. Designed for fast, low work over the battlefield, pilots were trained to fly at 76 metres (250 feet) for safety reasons, although it was emphasised that lower altitudes would be required in combat.

A total of 126 FR.9s were made, serving with four active squadrons and a training unit, and remained in service into the early 1960s.

*The Meteor was perhaps unsophisticated, but it had clean and elegant lines*



**“BOTH SIDES OF THE COCKPIT WALL HAD A MIX OF CONTROLS FOR THE ENGINES, ELECTRICS, RADIOS AND OTHER DEVICES”**

## COCKPIT

The cockpit of the Meteor FR.9 was cramped and crowded. While the basic flight instruments and controls ahead of the pilot were straightforward, both sides of the cockpit wall had a mix of controls for the engines, electrics, radios and other devices. When the F.24 camera was fitted, the camera controls were on the right-hand wall, but those for the more complicated F.95 had to be moved and fitted above the left side of the instrument panel.

*The FR.9 was a modified version of the F.8, which saw combat in Korea with the RAAF*



The FR.9 retained the F.8's four 20mm cannons (pictured here), with only the extreme tip of the nose being modified to take cameras

21

**“THE FR.9 CARRIED FOUR 20MM CANNONS, BUT ITS TRUE WEAPONS WERE ITS CAMERAS”**

## ARMAMENT

The FR.9 carried four 20mm cannons, but its true weapons were its cameras. The nose had three windows – looking forward and to each side – but the compartment could only contain one F.24 camera, and aircraft had to pass their targets at the correct angle. The F.24 was an excellent but old camera, unsuitable for jet aircraft. In 1953 the F.95 replaced it. Small enough to have one fitted at each window (each with a 400 exposure film), this made the FR.9 a much more flexible and capable aircraft.

*Right: Cleaning the guns on a Meteor Mk. 3. This would be important in the low-flying FR.9*



## ENGINE

The Rolls-Royce Derwent 8 was a development of the W.2B Welland, the production model of Frank Whittle's original jet engine, which had been used to power the Meteor F.1 in 1943. The basic single-stage centrifugal flow compressor turbojet with ten combustion chambers was modified through several marques, until the Mk.8 had nearly double the thrust of the original Wellands used on the F.1, with 1,587 kilograms (3,500 pounds) of thrust. The engine and supporting systems were simple, reliable and easily maintained.

**“THE MK. 8 HAD NEARLY DOUBLE THE THRUST OF THE ORIGINAL WELLANDS USED ON THE F.1”**

*Right: Simple but effective: The Rolls-Royce Derwent 8 at IWM Duxford*



## DESIGN

The FR.9 was based almost entirely on the F.8 fighter variant, with the addition of the camera-suitable nose cone. It kept the performance and armament of a fighter to suit its potential role over a battlefield, with the need to either defend itself or engage opportunistic ground targets. This commonality with a previous type explains the speed with which the aircraft entered service, and once in squadron service only two minor changes were made before it was retired – fitting ejector seats from December 1950 and updating the cameras in 1953.

*The FR.9 was able to be quickly introduced because of its similarities to the F.8 fighter variant*





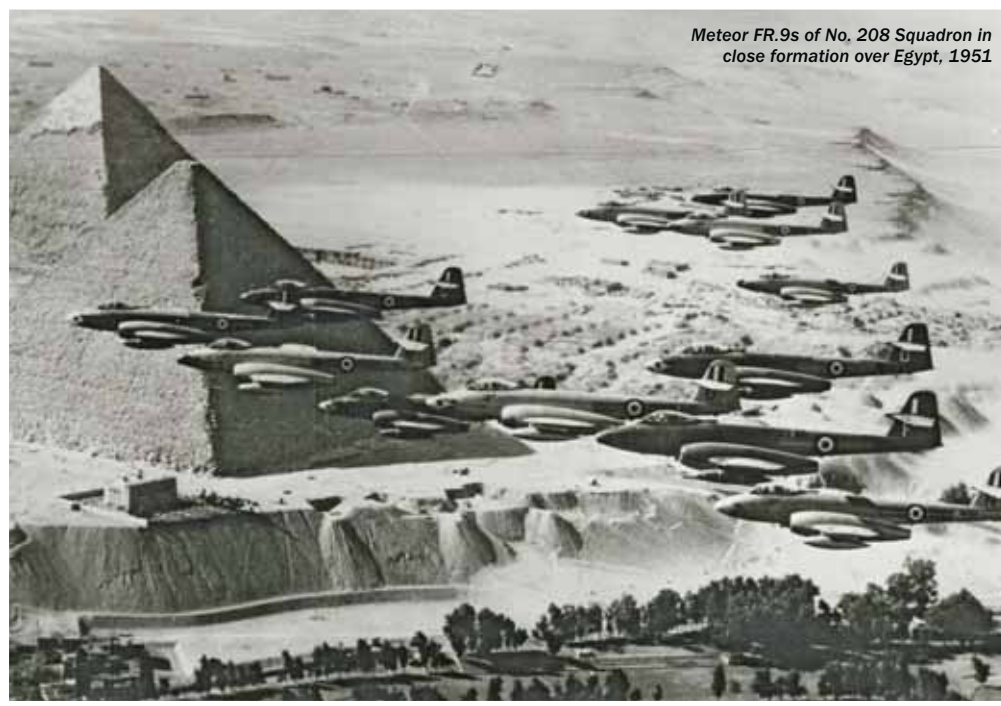
# SERVICE HISTORY

**THE METEOR FR.9 WAS INTRODUCED SWIFTLY AND SAW SERVICE IN SEVERAL PARTS OF THE WORLD**

The Meteor FR.9 first flew on 22 March 1950. By the end of the year the type entered service with No. 2 Squadron in Germany, followed by No. 208 Squadron in Egypt. In December 1951 No. 79 Squadron, also in Germany, received FR.9s, and the last frontline squadron to fly them, No. 8

Squadron in Aden, received them in 1958. Pilots trained at No. 226 Operational Conversion Unit.

The speed of introduction was due to the fact the aircraft only had minor modifications from the Meteor F.8 fighter, which would see combat with the RAAF over Korea. Indeed, during the 1956 Suez Crisis No. 208 Squadron's FR.9s acted as fighters defending Cyprus, although without seeing action. The type gave particularly useful service in the Persian Gulf, where the British were fighting several small wars, and the last FR.9s were withdrawn from service there in 1961. Over 20 FR.9s were sold to Ecuador, Israel and Syria.



Meteor FR.9s of No. 208 Squadron in close formation over Egypt, 1951



An RAAF F.8 being serviced in 1952 in Korea. The F.8, on which the FR.9 was very closely based, saw service during the Korean War

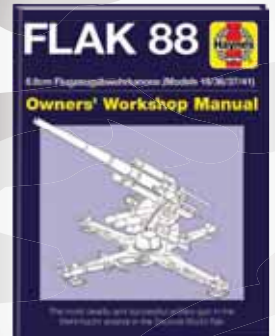
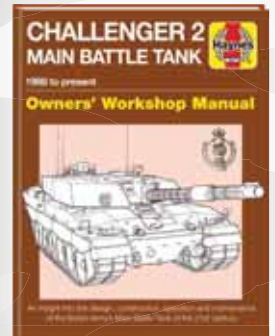
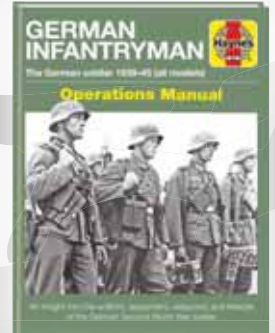


The FR.9 was a basic F.8 airframe, with only the camera compartment in the nose being different

Images: Alamy, Alex Pang



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AN INTERVIEW WITH ALLAN WILMOT

# THE WINDRUSH LIFESAVER

WORDS TOM GARNER

This WWII veteran served in the Royal Navy & RAF, working in search and rescue missions off Britain's coast. He later overcame discrimination to become a popular post-war entertainer

**A**lthough Britain's Caribbean colonies were far away from the United Kingdom, their men and women made a distinguished contribution during World War II. Thousands volunteered to come to Britain's aid and serve in the armed forces during its greatest crisis, including a teenage Jamaican called Allan Wilmot.

In a war characterised by dreadful killing, Wilmot spent the conflict saving lives in seaborne rescue capacities for the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. Despite the heroic

nature of his work, he also experienced institutionalised discrimination and outright racism from British civilians and American servicemen. Nevertheless, Wilmot persevered and later thrived as a successful entertainer who sang with the stars of post-war Britain. This is his remarkable story.

### Pre-war Jamaica

Born in Kingston in 1925, Wilmot grew up in a middle-class household where he was proud of his seafaring father. "When I was growing up my ambitions were towards the sea because

my father was the first Jamaican inter-island cargo boat skipper who wasn't European. When I saw his uniform and the adulation he received, I thought, "Well, that's for me!" However, my father said no because he didn't want me to go through what he had been through to reach where he was."

Jamaican life was dominated by British rule, and the island's black-majority population lived under a discriminatory regime. "You had to accept the colonial system. For example, in the police force, Jamaicans could never get higher than a sergeant and there were no black faces

**"THE EMPIRE WAS IN TROUBLE. MOST OF US HAD JUST LEFT COLLEGE AND WE THOUGHT THAT IF WE SERVED AND SURVIVED THEN WE'D BE ABLE TO HAVE A START IN LIFE. THAT WAS THE MAIN OBJECTIVE"**



An Air Sea Rescue launch pulls RAF aircrewmen to safety after they were forced to ditch their aircraft in the North Sea, 29 December 1942

in government or banks, they were all white. You had to accept it – what could you do? Of course, you had black politicians who started the independence movement, but at the time it seemed like an impossible dream.”

Despite the discrimination, loyalty to the British Empire was strong. “It was all mixed up. We were very familiar with *Rule Britannia* and all those songs, and you were more or less proud to be British. You were part of the empire, and if anybody said, ‘We’re going to kick the British out’ you looked at them as if they were mad.”

When war broke out in 1939, Jamaica and other British colonies became immediately involved in the fight against Germany. Wilmot remembers the conflict’s immediate impact when war was declared: “The German cruiser *Emden* was in Kingston but within hours she was away. Chamberlain was trying to talk Germany out of the war but the Germans realised it was coming because of what they were going to do. They had their submarines all placed in the West Indies, and they started sinking ships within days.”

Despite the danger the war posed, service in the armed forces was seen as a good opportunity for many Jamaicans, including Wilmot, who volunteered for the Royal Navy in 1941, even though he was only 16. “The empire was in trouble. Most of us had just left college and we thought that if we served and survived then we’d be able to have a start in life. That was the main objective.”

### Minesweeping

After training, Wilmot was assigned as an ordinary seaman to the minesweeper HMS *Hauken*, which was a converted Norwegian whaler. *Hauken* was deployed during what became known as the Battle of the Caribbean. This naval campaign was part of the larger Battle of the Atlantic and involved an intensive Axis attempt to sink Allied shipping in the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. Submarines wreaked havoc torpedoing Allied merchant vessels that transported vital supplies of essential materials. Over 300 ships were sunk and 1.5 million tons of supplies were lost with the loss of only 12 U-boats during this campaign, and it was in this intense situation that Wilmot first gained military experience.

Out of a crew of approximately 45, Wilmot was one of five Jamaican sailors who worked closely with the predominantly Anglo-Norwegian crew. “Once you were on the ship it was like a family, you depended on each other.” Onboard co-operation was vital for survival, as Wilmot soon discovered: “When you got there you realised it was no joke because all we did was pick up survivors from submarine attacks. It was more or less a suicide job because we could see the mines that the German submarines laid. You could mostly see them during the day, but at

night you could see nothing. It was just a case of surviving to see a new day. Everybody put on a brave face but it wasn’t always the feeling among the big, brave guys, and there would be dead silence during the nights. I saw many big fellows go to pieces at times.”

As well as minesweeping, *Hauken* performed other duties. “We also used to go on convoy escorts. This was because, as big as the ocean was, there were shipping lanes where the submarines laid the mines to sink the ships. We had to sink as much as we could and at the same time escort convoys because they went from Kingston to the Panama Canal. We had to take them halfway and the US Navy would then take over.”

Wilmot recalls that rescuing survivors from sunken vessels was the most distressing task: “We picked up Allied and German crews who were still alive in the water and carried them to the nearest port. They were poor buggers. It was terrible because when the ships sank the sea sometimes caught fire, and although they were in the water they burned to death. It was frightening, but after a while you got accustomed to it. I was only 16-17 and all the excitement meant that you thought nothing was going to happen to you. The feeling was that you were invincible.”

*Right: Allan Wilmot’s war service took him from minesweeping duties in the Caribbean Sea to saving lives in the waters around Britain*



Wilmot served on Hauken until late 1943, when he applied to join the RAF. He was ambitious and wanted the opportunity to see more of the world. "After a while I realised I wasn't getting anywhere in the navy, and when they asked for volunteers for the RAF Air Sea Rescue I volunteered because I thought that would be another chance. It was also a chance to go to Europe, because in the navy I was in West Indian waters. Air Sea Rescue was a glamorous section, and if I survived the war my ambition was to become a Merchant Navy deck officer. It looked very far-fetched for someone with a black face, but as far as I was concerned I wanted the qualification and didn't know anything about racism."

### A professional rescuer

During WWII, the waterborne RAF Air Sea Rescue Service was an elite force that specialised in rescuing downed aircrews. Serving in this unit required passing vigorous tests, but Wilmot knew he had the necessary skills and experience: "I used to go on the boat with my father and studied navigation to the point where I was more or less involved in advanced shipping. I was experienced and the RAF knew that. You had to go through an assessment, and when I got behind the wheel [of a boat] they asked, "How long have you been doing this?" but I said, "Don't mess me about." As a kid I had learned all these things and it was easy."

Wilmot was accepted and arrived in England in July 1944. Despite his experience, many British people were surprised that Jamaicans served in the RAF, where competition for places was high. "You had to have the right qualifications otherwise you couldn't get in. When the English guys saw us in RAF uniforms they would say, 'How the hell did you get in that uniform?' They didn't realise that although we didn't have a university in Jamaica at the time, we did have a high standard of education."

Skills and experience were a valuable commodity in the Air Sea Rescue Service, and Wilmot would spend the rest of the war serving

## "RESCUE MISSIONS WOULD ONLY LAST THREE OR FOUR HOURS BECAUSE OUR TIME WAS LIMITED FROM BURNING FUEL AT ABOUT 100 GALLONS AN HOUR"

in all four countries of the UK as a leading aircraftman. However, he was primarily based in southern England and spent the majority of his time rescuing airmen on high-speed boats in the English Channel or the Thames. Rescue missions were well-coordinated between RAF aeroplanes and the launches. "Our job was to rescue the fliers. When they went on a mission and realised they could not make it home they would head for the Channel or the river [Thames] and ditch in the water instead of landing. Catalina, Short Sunderland and Fairey Swordfish aircraft were used to direct us to where the fellows ditched, and we had to speed there so that they didn't freeze to death."

Wilmot recalls that RAF marine operations were very different from his naval experiences: "In the navy we just floated around for three weeks at sea and a week onshore, but in the RAF we weren't out at sea for long. Rescue missions would only last three or four hours because our time was limited from burning fuel at about 100 gallons (455 litres) an hour."

Although RAF rescue launches consumed a lot of fuel, they achieved very high speeds that enabled Wilmot and his crewmates to save many lives. "We were the fastest thing on the water and did over 30 knots. The survivors were so happy to be rescued, and that was the most important thing. We had onboard first aid to do what could be done, but our main objective was to get them back to shore to hospital."

Although the majority of the rescued airmen were Allied personnel, Wilmot also vividly remembers saving the enemy: "The thing that always stuck in my memory was rescuing a

German pilot. When he realised that it was a black hand that was pulling him out of the water he stopped for a few seconds and couldn't believe it. They thought they were the superior race, and I'll never forget that pilot because he'd never been in contact with a black person before."

Despite the Nazis' hideous racial ideologies, Wilmot pitied the victims of the Allied bombing campaign over Germany, both civilians and military: "It was very strange because they were supposedly meant to be my enemy. We complained about the East End being bombed but Germany was flattened. Because I was stationed in southern England I used to watch the Allied planes go over every night. One of my duties was to taxi aircrews into seaplanes before they flew. I'd look at them and say, "Poor buggers, they ain't going to come back." They were so happy but some of them didn't return."

### Wartime discrimination

In many ways, the Germans were the least of Wilmot's problems. When he first arrived in Britain, his preconceptions turned out to be rather different from the reality: "I never realised that there were poor people in England because I had never seen a poor white English person in Jamaica. When I came to England and saw the oppression, and houses with outside toilets and no baths except public ones, it was strange."

Wilmot was also surprised at the widespread British ignorance of black people: "When you said you were from Jamaica they would ask where it was in Africa because they assumed that if you were black you were African. They knew absolutely nothing, but we Jamaicans knew everything about England because of our school curriculum."

This ignorance often manifested itself in casual racism that appears shocking today. "At that time many had not seen a black face. As far as they were concerned you were African, you had a tail and when you came to Europe they cut the tail off. When you went to a dance hall and danced with the girls you could feel her hand



This photograph of the five-year-old Allan Wilmot was taken when he accompanied his father to a civic reception in Kingston for the visiting King George V in 1930



Wilmot pictured aged 16 in November 1941, shortly after he joined the Royal Navy as an ordinary seaman



Wilmot admired his father Charles, who broke the race barrier to become the first black Jamaican captain of an inter-island merchant vessel



Jamaican volunteer Sally Lopez shares a cigarette with Leading Aircraftman Carl Aitken before she joins the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, 9 February 1943



Above: Sergeant Lincoln Lynch served in No. 102 Squadron as an air gunner, won a trophy for his performance during training and shot down an enemy Junkers Ju 88 on his first mission

## — THE CARIBBEAN CONTRIBUTION DURING WWII —

THOUSANDS OF CARIBBEAN PEOPLE VOLUNTEERED TO AID BRITAIN DURING THE WAR AND SERVED IN ALL AREAS OF THE ARMED FORCES

The UK was frequently beleaguered during WWII, but it was fully supported by considerable manpower from the British Empire. Thousands of volunteers from the Caribbean colonies alone travelled to Britain to assist the war effort, including over 100 women who served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Many Caribbean volunteers served in the RAF in roles that ranged from fighter pilots, bomber crewmen, ground staff, administration or seaborne roles. A total of 103 of these RAF personnel received awards for bravery. The naval contribution was also significant, with thousands serving in the Royal Navy or, most dangerously, the British Merchant Navy, where the death rate was proportionally higher than the armed forces.

In the British Army, skilled West Indian technicians served in the Royal Engineers while the Caribbean Regiment was formed from over 1,000 volunteers and served in the Middle East and Italy. 236 Caribbean volunteers were killed and 265 more were wounded during the war, and their valuable contribution was finally recognised in June 2017 with the unveiling of the African and Caribbean War Memorial in London.



Mortar crewmen of the 1st Battalion, Caribbean Regiment pictured in Egypt before they returned home, 21 August 1945



Wilmot (back row, far left) with fellow Caribbean air force personnel at RAF Hunmanby Moor, July 1944. In peacetime, this training base was a Butlin's holiday camp



Wilmot (right) pictured during the war as a leading aircraftman with his friend and fellow RAF motor boat crew member Roy Griffiths

# “THE SEA SHALL NOT HAVE THEM”

THE RAF AIR SEA RESCUE SERVICE SAVED THOUSANDS OF LIVES DURING WWII USING HIGH-SPEED LAUNCHES

The Marine Branch of the Royal Air Force was formed only 11 days after the service itself was founded in 1918, to provide waterborne support and services for the RAF across the world. Initially known as the ‘Marine Craft Section’, what became known as the Air Sea Rescue Service (ASRS) was developed in the 1930s with the design of fast rescue launches.

One of the most influential boats was the ST-200 Mk. 1, which was 11.4 metres (37.5 feet) long and had a top speed of 29 knots. In a curious twist of military history, the vessel’s creation was lobbied for and tested by T.E. Lawrence (also known as ‘Lawrence of Arabia’) while serving as an aircraftman in the RAF.

The success of the ST-200 led to the development of faster rescue boats during the 1930s, and when war broke out they became indispensable lifesavers. The ASRS supported operations globally, but their main deployment was in the English Channel. Among many other missions, five launches rescued 500 soldiers from Dunkirk and 93 were deployed supporting maritime operations on D-Day. It is estimated that at least 8,000 lives were saved by the crews of the rescue boats, who operated in all weathers and often in the face of enemy action. Such was their determination to preserve life that the ASRS’s motto became “The Sea Shall Not Have Them”.

going down your behind because they’d been told, ‘Try and see if you can feel the stump.’”

To begin with, Caribbean servicemen were not even served in public houses. “In the early days during the war we would go into a pub and we couldn’t get served. They would ignore our requests until we asked for things like double whiskies. They realised they could make more money out of us because we didn’t have one pint of beer and space it out all night. We’d have six whiskies, for example, and then suddenly we were welcome in the pubs.”

Wilmot’s solution for dealing with racism was to use humour against those who insulted him: “When I came to England I never knew terms like ‘Darkie’ and ‘Blackie’. It shook us when kids would say things like that to us in Britain. A lot of my Jamaican mates took the racism very hard because it was the first time they had left home to a foreign country, but I’d been around. I used to think, ‘I’m not going to let the racism get on top of me’ because the poor people were uneducated. Eventually, if they said, ‘Hello Darkie!’ I would reply, ‘Hello Whitey!’ and they would look amazed. You could see them thinking, ‘What the bloody hell, am I Whitey?’ Giving it them back solved the problem because it shocked them – they were looking for you to be annoyed or something.”

Despite the initial hostility, Wilmot and his Jamaican comrades were eventually accepted by the British. “They were told that we lived in trees but after a while, when they realised that we were just like them in many ways, then the whole scene changed. They said, ‘You’ve left your warm country to come and help us in our hour of need.’ So I can’t complain.”

British women in particular were very receptive towards the Caribbean servicemen. “The white women were different from the men, who seemed to be jealous because the female interest was on us and not them. Their attitude was, ‘Why him and not me?’ They didn’t realise

that while these girls had read about black people it was their first chance to get close. I questioned a girl as to why they were interested in us, and she said, ‘You’re different. You’re something new and you’re more friendly.’”

Wilmot’s worst encounters of racism came from American servicemen stationed in Britain. “Our big enemies in England were the white Americans. Most of them were from the Deep South, and they couldn’t believe that the British black guys were associating with the white girls. They would come around socialising with the local girls and say, ‘Hey n\*\*\*\*r, get out of here!’ When you say that word to a West Indian it is like putting a red cloth in front of a bull. We went wild, and the white Americans didn’t realise that a black face could hit them. They realised that they had to keep away from these British black guys because we didn’t mess about.”

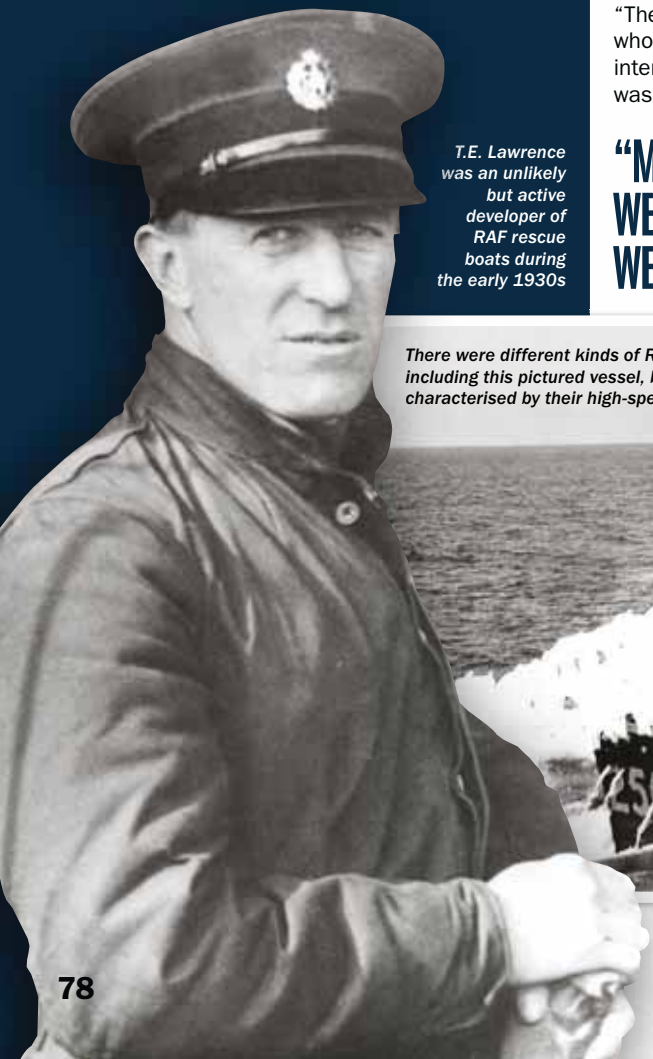
The clashes with white Americans were bitterly fought affairs. “We got into some dangerous physical fights with them. They mostly happened in pubs and dance halls. By the time the Americans realised what was happening it was too late. We used chairs and everything else, and I would sit down afterwards and say, ‘How the hell could half a dozen of us do so much damage?’ Most black Jamaicans are of Ashanti slave descent and were those that rebelled and never gave in. That’s where we get that aggressive, fighting spirit from.”

During these altercations, Wilmot received support from British women, although the authorities would treat the Jamaicans unfairly afterwards. “The women used to take their shoes off because they hated the white Americans for throwing their weight around. They [the white American men] had money, stockings, sweets etc. but not all the population fell for that. Nevertheless, the police would come and arrest us and hand us over to the RAF authorities. Funnily enough, they didn’t

## “MOST BLACK JAMAICANS ARE OF ASHANTI SLAVE DESCENT AND WERE THOSE WHO REBELLED AND NEVER GAVE IN. THAT’S WHERE WE GET THAT AGGRESSIVE, FIGHTING SPIRIT FROM”

T.E. Lawrence was an unlikely but active developer of RAF rescue boats during the early 1930s

There were different kinds of RAF rescue launches, including this pictured vessel, but all were characterised by their high-speed capabilities





# WINDRUSH FOUNDATION

The Windrush Foundation is a registered charity that designs and delivers heritage projects, programs and initiatives that highlight African and Caribbean peoples' contributions to the UK's public services, arts, commerce and other areas of socio-economic and cultural life in Britain.  
[www.windrushfoundation.com](http://www.windrushfoundation.com)

arrest the white Americans, and that went on for a little while until things got really hot in Europe and they shipped out the lot."

By contrast, the Caribbean servicemen mentored their black American counterparts until late 1944, when the Ardennes Offensive began. "We were their guidance. They couldn't dream of associating with white girls because the white Americans would lock them up, but when they were with us they did well and a friendly thing was set up. We had some friendship between fellow black people, but after a while the Americans started to give them time off on different days, it went so bad. Then, in December 1944, things changed greatly when the Germans went through Belgium and it felt like everything was going back to square one. Everything available was shipped out to stop the Germans.

"I was stationed at RAF Calshot near Southampton so I could see what was happening. Every night the hospital ship came absolutely packed, and by daylight it was away to bring another load back in the evening. The Germans made mincemeat of them."

Because of the intense destruction during WWII, Wilmot is proud that his job was to save lives: "I'm very happy now that I wasn't in something where I had to kill or be killed. I've spoken to a few ex-servicemen and they say they can't get over the killing they have done, especially when they go to bed at night. I thank God that I was saving lives and not doing the killing."

## Post-war struggles

When the war ended, Wilmot and his fellow West Indian servicemen were abruptly demobbed. "We were told, 'Go home, your service is finished.' I wanted to go home, but they weren't expecting us in Jamaica. Apparently they said it was the British government's duty to help us. However, the British handed over responsibility to the Jamaicans and nothing was done. We were just given a dinner, our back pay and that was it."

On the troopship back to Jamaica, Wilmot encountered fellow countrymen who were suffering what would now be called post-traumatic stress disorder. "They had volunteered to go to England, but on the troopship I went down to the sick bay. When I opened the door there were about 30 Jamaicans off in a different world. I quickly closed the door and asked the attendant, 'What happened to those guys?' They had gone off their head while going home, and when we docked at Kingston the ambulance came and took them away. I never heard a word

*Wilmot emigrated to England in December 1947, six months before his brother Harold (centre) was pictured sailing on the famous voyage of the MV Empire Windrush*



**"I'VE SPOKEN TO A FEW EX-SERVICEMEN AND THEY SAY THEY CAN'T GET OVER THE KILLING THEY HAVE DONE, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY GO TO BED AT NIGHT. I THANK GOD THAT I WAS SAVING LIVES AND NOT DOING THE KILLING"**



mentioned about them, but those guys had shellshock. They never left home and just sat and read the Bible."

Wilmot got a good job in Jamaica as a customs and excise officer in the rum business but chose to return to England in December 1947. He arrived at Southampton six months before the famous disembarkation of over 800 West Indian emigrants (including his brother Harold) from MV Empire Windrush on 22 June 1948.

Wilmot attempted to use his military experience to apply for officer training in the British Merchant Navy but he encountered institutionalised racism. "They said that I applied under the auspices of the RAF and they only had a certain number of vacancies. When I said I had also been in the Royal Navy they just said, 'OK' and still turned me down. It wasn't done to have somebody black being trained as a Merchant Navy officer. I began to see what the outside world was like and things unfortunately began to change."

Despite the pressing need for workers to rebuild post-war Britain, Wilmot was actively made to feel unwelcome. "It was a different world and I got the shock of my life. When I was in uniform I was accepted. For example, when I was in London I used to go the Union Jack Club with my RAF pass and they would give me a room. When I came back, there were all these notices saying, 'No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs'. Nobody would employ me and they'd say, 'Sorry, no vacancies but you could do a 'broom' job?' I wasn't going to do that after I'd been a civil servant. I don't want to repeat how I felt, but I had to survive."

At one point, Wilmot was reduced to a state of near-homelessness in London. "To save me from sleeping on the street I had to take the last tube on the end of the line. Some of the tube men were ex-servicemen and they took pity on us and let us sleep in the carriage until the morning. We only had one suitcase each for washing materials... and I would wash plates

## "IT WASN'T DONE TO HAVE SOMEBODY BLACK BEING TRAINED AS A MERCHANT NAVY OFFICER. I BEGAN TO SEE WHAT THE OUTSIDE WORLD WAS LIKE AND THINGS UNFORTUNATELY BEGAN TO CHANGE"

in a hotel at Marble Arch. This was to survive because at least I had a meal there. That went on for a while until things started changing."

Although Wilmot was an ex-serviceman, he once again received a hostile reception from the British. "It made no difference. The attitude was, 'So what? The war has finished, why don't you go home? What have you come back for?' It was like a bad dream until the British eventually realised that Jamaicans were good workers." Wilmot eventually found a job as a postman, and although he had military and civil service experience he was pleased just to find employment. "I was so shocked that I couldn't say yes immediately, but I accepted. It was good news, and once I'd done my training it was lovely. By that time, the Irish started to realise that they could rent out their spare rooms to Jamaicans so that also eased my accommodation problem."

### Show business and the Windrush scandal

Wilmot soon managed to forge a new career path as a successful singer from 1949. "In those days, anything that was black in entertainment was American, and my friend said, 'If we can form a group we can do just as good as the Americans.' He started a group called the 'Ken Hunter Quartet'. People would say, 'But you're not British or American?' and I would do an accent and say, 'Yeah, but I'm American now!'"

After the Ken Hunter Quartet, Wilmot joined the vocal group 'The Southlanders' with Vernon Nesbeth, Frank Mannah and his brother Harold. The famous Trinidadian singer and

Above: Wilmot (second from right) stands with other WWII veterans at the African and Caribbean War Memorial in London, 8 May 2018

Above, left: Wilmot (centre, top) became a successful singer in the Southlanders during the 1950s-70s. He is also the uncle of British entertainer Gary Wilmot MBE

actor Edric Connor formed the group, and they became a successful act in the 1950s. Their first single in 1955 was a cover of *Earth Angel*, which was produced by George Martin, who later became the Beatles' legendary producer.

The Southlanders achieved a top 20 chart hit with *Alone* and are most famous for the novelty song *I Am A Mole And I Live In A Hole*. From the 1950s until their disbandment in 1974, they performed alongside singers, groups and comedians such as Cliff Richard and the Shadows, Bob Hope, David Frost and Morecambe and Wise, among others. They became famous for their live performances and regular TV appearances, which enabled Wilmot to meet many of his heroes, including Walt Disney and Sammy Davis Jr.

Wilmot's glittering success as a popular entertainer was a far cry from the discrimination he received in his early life. Nevertheless, he's dismayed with the 'Windrush scandal' that engulfed British politics in 2018 over the wrongful detention and deportation of (mostly Caribbean) Commonwealth citizens, who immigrated to the UK as British subjects before 1973. "It's scandalous. Most went to school here and worked all their lives but suddenly they are 'illegal immigrants'. Quite a few have been arrested and deported, but why? The attitudes have to change, but it has all come to the forefront now. Nothing can be hidden and the government's scared."

The Windrush scandal is all the more shocking considering the contribution and sacrifice thousands of Caribbean servicemen made during WWII. They left their homes and served with distinction despite often enduring unacceptable racism from the very people they had come to help. For this reason, their service should be prominently lauded. Wilmot is convinced that the people of the empire played a decisive role in saving Britain: "The empire was ultimately why Hitler stopped and didn't invade England. The British government would have moved to Canada and carried on the fight from there or somewhere else in the empire. Hitler realised that if he had captured Britain he would have a big fight on his hands."

## NOW YOU KNOW

Now You Know. *The Memoirs Of Allan Charles Wilmot: WWII Servicemen And Post-War Entertainer* is Allan Wilmot's autobiography and is available from Liberation Publishers.

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# IS THERE EVER A 'GOOD WAR'?

Prolific columnist & author **Peter Hitchens** discusses the cultural impact of WWI & how wartime propaganda has shaped our national remembrance

It is only possible to pretend that one war is good until the next war comes along. I still treasure my great uncle's 1914-1918 medal (he was at Jutland) inscribed with the words, "The Great War for Civilisation". In more elevated moments, those who survived it liked to dignify the Flanders slaughter as 'The war to end war'. After all, if it really had ended war, then it might just have been worth it.

But how quickly all that came apart. As a child, I used to love the terse, graphic stories of 'Gun Buster' about the British Expeditionary Force's retreat to Dunkirk. This shocking, disturbing event was seen through the eyes of artillery officers and was plainly autobiographical. The most poignant concerned a young captain trying to hold the line against the advancing Nazis somewhere near Ypres. Suddenly, in a brief lull, he realises exactly where he is – at the Menin Gate, that great monument to the dead of the Ypres Salient. And a memory comes pouring back into his mind of a chilly evening in the 1920s, watching in some bafflement as his father, with tears in his eyes, picked out the names of his comrades from the thousands inscribed there. His father, moved by an unusual passion, had asked his son urgently, "Do you know what this means?" and then answered his own question: "It means... never again!" And now, there he was, using the same Menin Gate as an observation post, as his battery shelled the advancing German army. So much for "never again!"

But for a few years people really had believed that there would never be another European war. This fantasy reached its high-water mark in 1928 with the absurd Kellogg-Briand Pact, whose signatories, including most of the belligerents of the coming global conflict, renounced war, to resolve "disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them".

A year later, France, plainly not wholly convinced of the pact's worth, began to build the Maginot Line. By 1935, the forges and shipyards of

*Hitchens notes modern statesmen's willingness to present opponents as "the latest Hitlers"*

Europe and Japan were hard at work turning out the fearsome weapons of a war they had officially promised they would never declare or join.

The following swift and terrible events have overlaid the foolish period of pseudo-religious optimism that had much of the world in its grip, and that quite possibly blinded much of the world to the danger it faced. If the great powers of 1928 had sought, for instance, to listen more sympathetically to a pre-Hitler Germany's grievances about Versailles, we might have avoided much horror. It is, in some ways, one of the great might-have-beens of modern history. But believing either that war was finished for good, or that it was simply too terrible to fight again, those involved did not think the issue was urgent enough.

**"OUR PRESENT-DAY FANTASY THAT WWII WAS A 'GOOD WAR', FOUGHT NOBLY FOR NOBLE ENDS & A MODEL FOR HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, DAMAGES US"**

It is astonishing, for those of us used to the gigantic military power of the USA, to find how militarily weak that country was throughout the inter-war period. The US Navy, it is true, was a mighty fleet, if a little elderly. But American air power was negligible, and the US Army, by 1939, was ranked only 17th in the armies of the world, between Portugal and Bulgaria, described by *Life* magazine as the "smallest, worst-equipped armed force of any major power". France's theoretical army was huge, but it was not trained or configured for a war of aggression. France, understandably, had no intention of undergoing a second Verdun, or taking any action – political, diplomatic or military – to bring such a thing about.

Nowadays there is much bloviating about how Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland was the moment at which the democratic powers could and should have acted. But the record of the time shows that this simply was not a practical possibility. They were not interested in action they had not trained or prepared for – they

had no political will to act. The 'war to end war' and the 'great war for civilisation' were powerful forms of wishful thinking, which led free countries into policies that eventually led to war.

But history does not repeat itself exactly. Our present-day fantasy that World War II was a 'good war', fought nobly for noble ends and a model for human behaviour, damages us in different ways. Repeatedly, modern would-be statesmen seek to identify themselves as Churchill, their proposed enemy as Hitler and their critics as Neville Chamberlain. The more they do this, the more illusions they peddle, to themselves and to the public, about the nature of war and diplomacy. They are also compelled to misrepresent the importance of, and the danger from, their proposed enemies. Interestingly, real modern instances of the unwise appeasement of aggressive violence – the endless pressure on Israel to give up real defensible territory in return for a paper peace, and the surrender of sovereignty by the UK, under pressure from the gangster violence of the IRA – are popular and respectable.

Now we are shuffling, half-asleep, into involvement in a Middle-Eastern conflict between Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran, a process fuelled by claims that Syria's President Assad and his Russian backer Vladimir Putin are the latest Hitlers. If our leaders manage to fan this into full-scale war (and they never cease to try), the only beneficiaries will be the Chinese despotism that watches us keenly and closely, with an intelligence greater than our own, staying out of our follies but preparing to take advantage of them. And when it is all over, as we scuttle about as ghosts of our former selves in diminished, impoverished post-war lives, we may at last learn that there is no such thing as a good war, only – very rarely – a just war, and that, just as our leaders are very rarely Churchills, our opponents are seldom Hitlers. But must we have another war to learn this?



*Above: The British Victory Medal presented the horrors of WWI as a struggle for civilisation*



Peter Hitchens is a columnist for the *Mail on Sunday*. His new book *The Phoney Victory: The World War II Illusion* is published by I.B. Tauris



# REMEMBER BELGIUM

*A WWI recruitment poster seizes on stories of German atrocities in Belgium to position the war as a 'noble' and 'good' war to stop such brutal acts*



# ENLIST TO-DAY

Image: Getty

# MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover a city's unique commemoration, WWI stories with the National Army Museum & Scotland's monument to William Wallace



## BRISTOL'S TRIBUTE TO THE FALLEN

THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION IS CURRENTLY RUNNING A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION, 'AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN', TO COMMEMORATE THE LOCAL CASUALTIES OF THE TWO WORLD WARS

Greenbank Cemetery contains the graves of British and Commonwealth servicemen, as well as German Luftwaffe crew and a memorial to the victims of the Bristol Blitz of 1941

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) is an intergovernmental organisation of six independent member states. Its principal function is to mark, record and maintain the graves and commemorative places of the 1.7 million Commonwealth military personnel who died during the two world wars.

'At the Going Down of the Sun' is a photography exhibition commissioned by the CWGC that remembers people who lost their lives in conflict over the last 104 years. With its title inspired by the famous remembrance poem written by Laurence Binyon, the exhibition specifically commemorates the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I and focuses on gravesites in the Bristol and Bath region.

Located in Bristol's medieval cathedral, the exhibition runs between 5 September and 18 November 2018 and is the culmination of a four-year photographic project by Marko Dutka. It features images of Commonwealth, civilian and enemy war graves, war memorials and air crash sites photographed between the hours of dusk and dawn. The idea of this nocturnal approach to

the photographs is to not just show the graves but also the subtle indicators of contemporary human existence, such as light pollution, cars, aircraft and satellite trails. These act as a metaphor for the continuing relationship between contemporary society and the people in the graves.

An extensive selection of graves have been photographed and include examples from a wide range of ages, races and faiths. One of the most important examples is the opportunity to capture female war graves that tell the stories of women as active participants, civilians and widows. Nine of the photographs are also accompanied by QR codes that provide links to oral histories. These are spoken by people who knew those who are buried.

Dutka, who has been a professional photographer for 19 years and has had previous work displayed at the Royal West of England Academy, explains why Bristol Cathedral is the perfect setting for 'At the Going Down of the Sun': "I am delighted that the exhibition will be displayed in the Cathedral. Unlike a whitewall exhibition space, the cathedral provides a contemplative space. It also has a particular context for it is itself a graveyard and a site of memorialisation. I hope that the images show the considerable commitment by the CWGC that is required to maintain these graves and keep the memories fresh in our minds. The opportunity to raise memorials to the 'ordinary' people of Bristol within architecture that is dedicated to the 'great and good' will be a fitting tribute to their extraordinary sacrifice."



Marko Dutka has photographed graves and modern lights to emphasise the link between the past and present



**"THE EXHIBITION SPECIFICALLY COMMEMORATES THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR I"**

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.BRISTOL-CATHEDRAL.CO.UK/WHATS-ON/AT-THE-GOING-DOWN-OF-THE-SUN](http://WWW.BRISTOL-CATHEDRAL.CO.UK/WHATS-ON/AT-THE-GOING-DOWN-OF-THE-SUN)



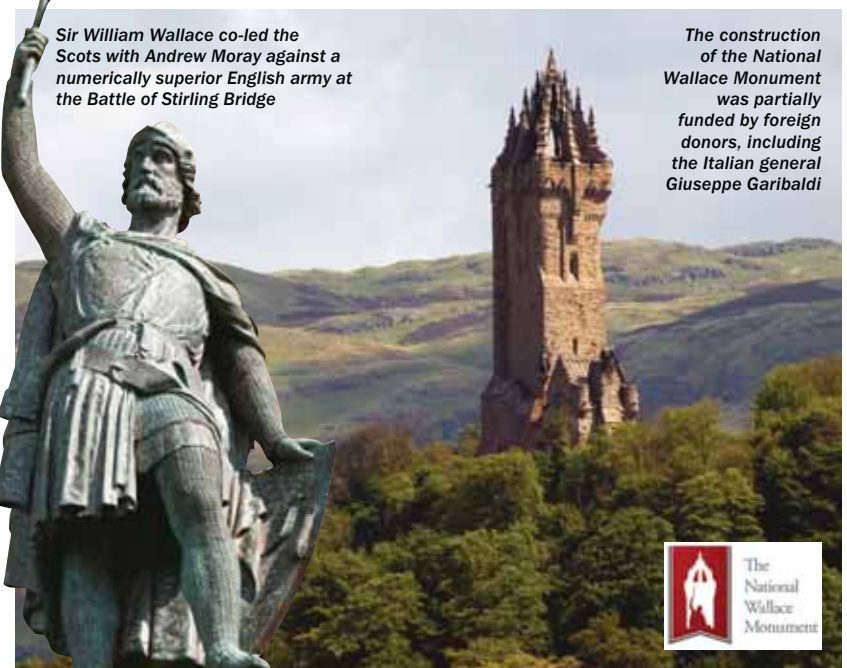
# WILLIAM WALLACE MONUMENT

**THIS IMPOSING AND DRAMATIC GOTHIC TOWER IS SCOTLAND'S TRIBUTE TO ITS MOST ICONIC WARRIOR FROM THE MIDDLE AGES**

The National Wallace Monument is one of the most striking memorials dedicated to medieval warfare in the United Kingdom. Completed in 1869, the monument is a 67-metre (220 feet) sandstone Victorian Gothic tower that commemorates Sir William Wallace. Wallace was a Scottish knight who became one of the leaders against Edward I's English occupation during the First Scottish War of Independence. Long regarded as one of Scotland's most venerated national heroes, the monument is located at the scene of Wallace's greatest victory, at Stirling Bridge in 1297.

The monument overlooks the River Forth near Stirling, on a volcanic hill called Abbey Craig, and it is open to the public. The top of the tower is known as 'The Crown' and offers magnificent views of the Scottish countryside for miles around.

The most famous exhibit inside the monument is the 'Wallace Sword', in the 'Hall of Heroes'. The sword is 1.67 metres (five feet six inches) long and is reputed to have belonged to Wallace himself, although this is disputed. Visitors can also visit the 'Hall of Arms', which tells the story of Wallace's life and the Battle of Stirling Bridge with a film, illuminated map and displays of weaponry and armour.

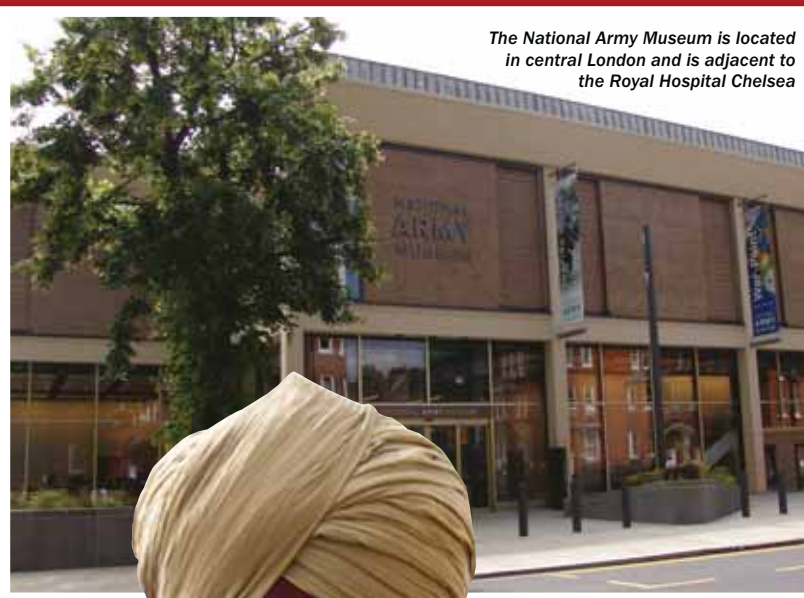


*Sir William Wallace co-led the Scots with Andrew Moray against a numerically superior English army at the Battle of Stirling Bridge*

*The construction of the National Wallace Monument was partially funded by foreign donors, including the Italian general Giuseppe Garibaldi*



**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.NATIONALWALLACEMONUMENT.COM](http://WWW.NATIONALWALLACEMONUMENT.COM)**



*The National Army Museum is located in central London and is adjacent to the Royal Hospital Chelsea*

## DISCOVER WWI'S GLOBAL FOCUS

**LONDON'S NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM HAS LAUNCHED A NEW WEBSITE DEDICATED TO TELLING THE STORY OF WORLD WAR I THROUGH INDIVIDUAL STORIES, MULTIMEDIA AND EVENTS NEWS**

'First World War in Focus' is the National Army Museum's (NAM) website that reveals the far-reaching impact of Britain's bloodiest war and where visitors can learn about the NAM's commemorative activities.

As well as containing details of exhibitions, events, news, videos and learning resources, First World War in Focus contains a section on "Soldiers' Stories". New material is added to the website every month that focuses on the experience of an individual WWI soldier from different parts of the United Kingdom.

The most recently uploaded story is that of Captain Gerald Uloth of Woodbridge, Suffolk. Uloth (1893-1973) served in the 28th Light Cavalry in the Indian Army and was deployed to Transcaspia in Central Asia in September 1918. His regiment's task was to resist German, Turkish and particularly Bolshevik influence in the region following the Russian Revolution. Uloth fought alongside a wide range of anti-Bolsheviks but despaired at the chaotic situation he found himself in: "It has always been my fate to take part in obscure and strange expeditions, but this really defeats everything. I am overwhelmed by it all."

Uloth's letters provide a unique insight into a little-known British military mission, and it is accounts like his that help to broaden our perceptions of the world's first global war.



*Captain Gerald Uloth's service in Central Asia is one of many unknown stories from WWI that are being told by NAM*

*'First World War in Focus' also highlights exhibitions and events that are happening at the NAM*

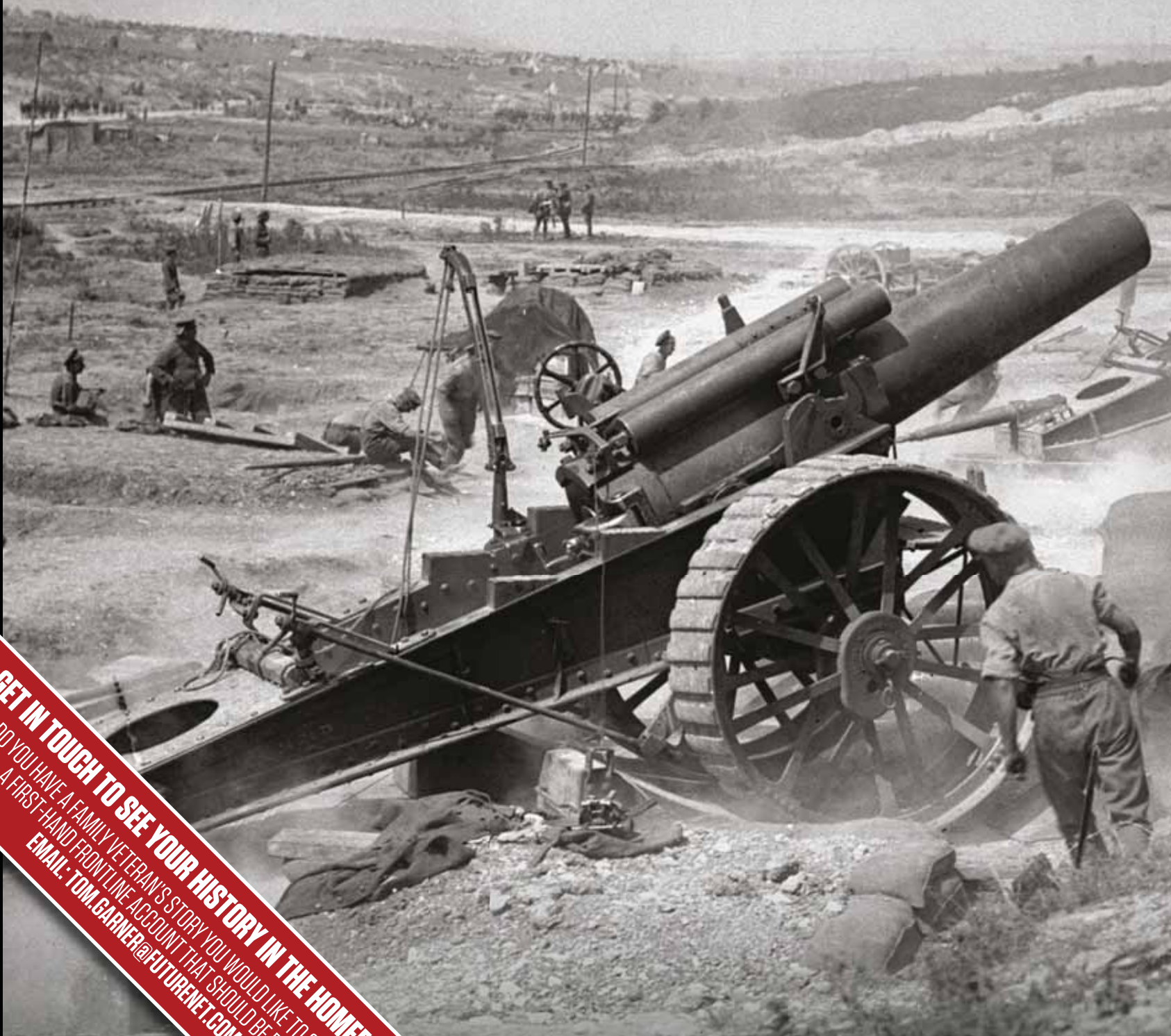


**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WW1.NAM.AC.UK](http://WW1.NAM.AC.UK)**



# REFLECTIONS FROM THE DAY THE GUNS STOPPED

On 11 November 1918, **Acting Captain Howard Palmer**, Royal Garrison Artillery, was on embarkation leave in Brighton. As the 11th hour passed, he recorded his immediate reactions to the end of the war



**GET IN TOUCH TO SEE YOUR HISTORY IN THE HOMEFRONT**  
DO YOU HAVE A FAMILY VETERAN'S STORY YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?  
A FIRST-HAND FRONTLINE ACCOUNT THAT SHOULD BE READ?  
EMAIL: [TOM.GARNER@FUTURENET.COM](mailto:TOM.GARNER@FUTURENET.COM)



**H**oward Palmer enlisted in August 1914, signing up with the Territorial Force, East Coast Defences, but later joined the Royal Garrison Artillery. He served through both world wars and lived to write his memoirs. He survived the Somme, Ypres and even the Spring Offensive in 1918, when he was returned to England as a casualty. But by the November, he was about to be sent to Mesopotamia, and after the Armistice he was posted to Salonika and Constantinople. The following is an excerpt from his memoirs, kindly provided by his great-niece, Hilary Jones.

To find out more go to: [www.facebook.com/akindofsoldiering](http://www.facebook.com/akindofsoldiering)

Howitzers of the Royal Garrison Artillery in action during the Battle of the Somme

**“DIRTY, LOUSY, STINKING, UNSHAVEN, UNKEMPT. WHERE WERE THE BANNERS, THE TRUMPETS, THE DRUMS, THE POMP, THE BOMBAST, THE GLORY?”**

*“It seemed more like spring than winter, for there was a change in tone of life as finally the Armistice was announced. The fighting would terminate at 11.00 on November 11th, 1918.*

*People seemed inclined to go out and stay out, and in the morning I was on the sea front in hazy sun and a quiet wind, just waiting. When the moment came and passed, nothing happened. But the faint distant rumble was stilled. The traffic had stopped, only the sea continued its ceaseless washing of the shore. The war was over.*

*I did not move. Long I looked out over the water while past scenes of death and danger came into my mind. Where were the men, and the boys quickly become men, who had flocked to the colours, followed the bands, drilled, fought, died? They didn't come back, those thousands who marched down Remembrance Hill to the harbour, the boat, The Line.*

*Many, many didn't come back, their resting place on foreign soil. Paternoster, Lucky Lucas, Thomas, McDonald – there is no armistice for them. But I was still here, I think. Was I lucky? Had I done my bit? Should I rejoice? Not at this moment – I could but feel sad and alone. This moment would not return, for I was in a vast Cathedral, a natural one, with its dome of sky and fleeting cloud. There would be many sharing my emotions just now, in their place of the moment – kitchens, back rooms, front rooms, the back yard, in the park – wherever – thinking, remembering, weeping.*

*The Germans, too (who would not be losing their arrogance with an armistice as with a total defeat), had had enormous losses, and their price for provoking war would be very high. They were known to us as the Bosch or Jerry and to some, mostly civilians, as the Hun. But few who spoke of the Hun had seen him when he was tired, beaten and hungry, straggling along a hundred strong, with one private as escort who did not even look round. Dirty, lousy, stinking, unshaven, unkempt. Where were the banners, the trumpets, the drums, the pomp, the bombast, the glory? But we should have gone through to Berlin.*

*Our fellows, of course, were often in a poor way when they were led on a string, for to be taken prisoner is perhaps the worst form of personal defeat. But who had won, and who had lost? What was the prize? And was the price not too high in any case? And for how long would the bill be coming in? Not just for cash too? For*

*we had lost the ‘flower of our youth’, and that would make a gap which could not be filled.*

*Was the war inevitable? For nobody now thought of it as a war of Kaisers and Kings. It was peoples, ways of thought, religion, speech, manners, customs, in short nationality. Or tribal division. Language? Was that a barrier or a shield? I was inclined to think a shield. If there was to be a universal tongue, it would have to be a non-national one, such as Esperanto. Otherwise, they – yes, ‘they’ – would go to war over which language should prevail.*

*Had I and did I hate the Germans? At times, of course, when I saw and heard things they did, but that was action and reaction. What were my motives? I had used my native skills and my military training to destroy them – at least a few at a time. Would I have had the same determination, apart from the instinct of self-preservation, to kill and maim, if I had to do it hand to hand, eye to eye, gut to gut? A thought for any gunner or airman who is but a cog in a vast killing machine.*

*Whichever way it could be thought out, there was the basic fact that I was a killer, a wounder, a maimer, a destroyer – for killing is not all that neat and efficient. It is a messy job, with the theme of pain running throughout.*

*These were the thoughts of the moment, and from them would spring other questions. What of the present? What of the future? But not just now. This was Armistice Day. Yet some answers had to be given. Had I, and did I now, hate the Germans? Was this a glorious victory? No, no and no.”*

Howard Palmer, pictured in 1916. Palmer penned this poignant memoir about the moments and emotions immediately following the Armistice

Images: Getty, Hilary Jones

# REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books & films

# THE CAPTAIN Q+A WITH DIRECTOR ROBERT SCHWENTKE

THE CREATOR OF THIS POWERFUL NEW WWII FILM EXPLAINS HIS INFLUENCES FROM CINEMA AND ART

Based on the horrific true story of Willi Herold, *The Captain* (released in 2017 in Germany as *Der Hauptmann*), is a new film from acclaimed director Robert Schwentke (*The Time Traveler's Wife*, *Flightplan*, *Red*, *Insurgent*), released by Signature Entertainment. Willi Herold was a corporal and winner of the Iron Cross for his service on the Italian front, but aged 19 he found a discarded Luftwaffe captain's uniform and gathered around him a unit of war-weary soldiers who acted on his sadistic impulses. High on the terrifying charisma of his clothing, Herold invented a secret mission from the führer and embarked on an odyssey of torture and slaughter.

*The Captain* was originally released in black and white, but a colour version is included on the DVD and Digital HD release, out now. Here, Schwentke discusses a few of the cinematic and artistic influences for creating the brutal world of *The Captain*.

## Frans Masereel woodblock prints

"When I was very young, when I was about five, I found a map of wood prints – woodblock prints by Frans Masereel – in our cellar. Growing up in Germany, you're exposed to every frame ever taken in concentration camps, war camps, because they wanted you to see everything. They wanted to raise a generation of pacifists – they wanted to counter-balance our history. And it worked with most of us – it worked with me.

"When I saw Frans Masereel woodblock prints, they spoke to me in a different way than the documentarian material that I had seen, and they spoke to me more deeply and emotionally. They stayed with me my whole life. He was Belgian and not German. He did

Two pages from Frans Masereel's wordless novel *A Passionate Journey*



**"TO ME, THE CAPTAIN WAS A WOOD PRINT. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE BEAUTY OF THE FILM AND THE UGLY THINGS IT DEPICTS, VERY MUCH COMES OUT OF MY EXPERIENCE OF LOOKING AT FRANS MASEREEL PRINTS"**



prints on World War I and during the economic depression. I thought that the lack of detail that comes with wood printing was exactly right to create a contrast of what was depicted, and the way it was depicted. And that contrast, I think for me, was where the emotion was generated.

"To me, *The Captain* was a wood print. The contrast between the beauty of the film and the ugly things it depicts very much comes out of my experience of looking at Frans Masereel prints."

## The Passenger (Andrzej Munk, 1963, Poland)

*The Passenger* is an interesting film, as it only exists as a fragment. Andrzej Munk died in a car accident before he could finish shooting the film. His friends finished it with voiceover and with stills from the set. It turns out that a fragment is a very suitable form for the narrative it depicts – for dealing with trauma and memory, and dealing with the past and violence. It was inspiring to see that you don't always have to bring everything to its ultimate and perfect conclusion in terms of narratives.

"Not every thread needs to be tied at the end. That was very interesting to me. Also the way he shot Auschwitz was very interesting. We didn't make a film about the Holocaust, but the war camp barracks were not that different from concentration camp barracks, and the way that Munk shot the actual camp was very interesting. I had never seen it shot that way."



## The Red & the White (Miklós Jancsó, 1967, Hungary)

"Interestingly, if you look at the films of Miklós Jancsó, yes they are historical narratives, but they are clearly a commentary on the Hungarian culture and Hungarian politics. That was inspiring to me. I felt you could make a narrative that still resonates today even if it takes place in the past. Our goal was to make a modern film that specifically took place in 1945 and deals with issues that are eternally applicable and still relevant today. Jancsó is also really interesting in the offhandedness of his violence."

*The Captain* is out now on Digital HD and DVD from Signature Entertainment



# MERCIA THE RISE & FALL OF A KINGDOM

THIS IN-DEPTH TITLE IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE SERIOUS STUDENT OF MERCIAN HISTORY

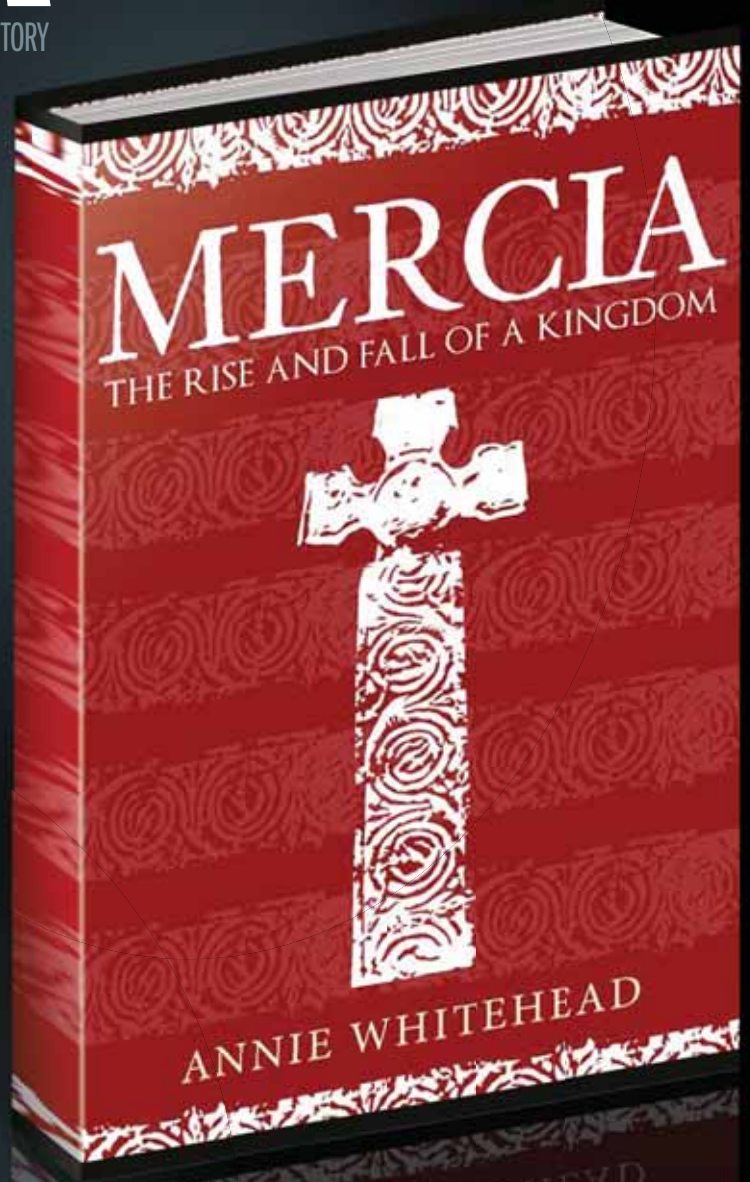
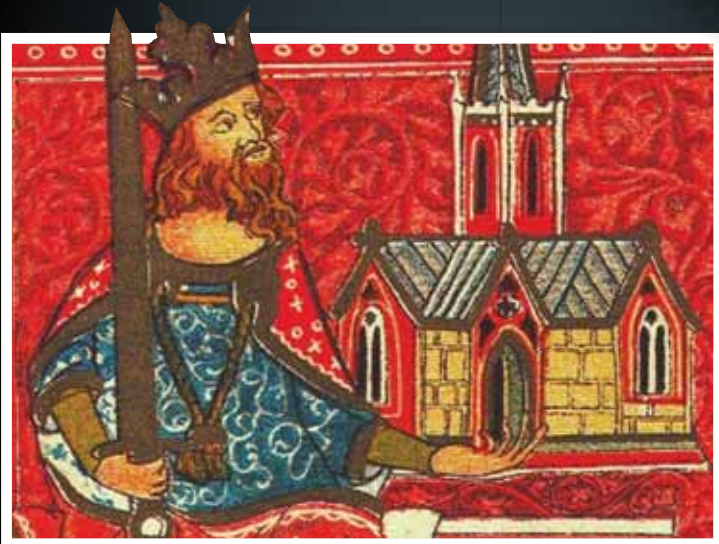
**Author:** Annie Whitehead **Publisher:** Amberley Publishing  
**Price:** £20.00

Mercia was one of the key Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. In the 9th century, when the Great Heathen Army came within a whisker of making England a Norse nation, Mercia was one of the four kingdoms (along with Wessex, Northumbria and East Anglia) that were facing the Vikings. Alfred and Wessex get all the credit for the defeat of the Vikings, but Mercia deserves a major share of the credit for the saving of England before England had really been invented. But where Northumbria had Bede, Wessex the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and East Anglia the silent witness of the magnificent finds at Sutton Hoo, Mercia remains silent. Its history is told only in charters, and the witness of its rivals and enemies.

Annie Whitehead's book tackles this historical silence head-on, attempting to reconstruct Mercia's history from the available clues, and in particular making excellent use of charters, the writs by which Mercian kings gifted land to followers and the church, the list of witnesses that formed a combined who's who and power list for Mercian politics (the top magnate signed his name at the top of the list and they went down in seniority). But the book's scholarly strength, which makes it an invaluable addition to the library of any serious student of Mercian history, is also its weakness for the general reader. By its nature, the book has to devote much of its length to the examination of sources: a serious and weighty matter to scholars, a dry and dusty subject to most other people.

Mercia produced some of the most important kings and leaders in early Medieval history: Penda, the last great pagan Anglo-Saxon king; Offa, dyke-builder and correspondent with Charlemagne; Æthelflæd, the Lady of the Mercians, who led the counter-offensive against the Vikings; and Eadric Streona, turncoat and traitor and the man who cemented the disastrous reign of Æthelred the Unready, a reign that led directly to the Norman Conquest. But despite the eminence of these kings and leaders, their tale is told by their enemies or allies, save for a small amount on

**“AS A SERIOUS EXAMINATION OF THE SOURCES & HISTORY OF MERCIA THIS IS A STANDOUT BOOK”**



Æthelflæd in the Mercian recension of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. If Mercian sources existed – and Whitehead demonstrates that there was no lack of learning in the kingdom – they have been lost or destroyed. Whitehead does a sterling job of bringing together the sources that remain and highlighting some of the unappreciated kings of Mercia such as the 8th-century Æthelbald, who reigned for an unprecedented 41 years while maintaining a contradictory reputation as an inveterate womaniser and benefactor of the church.

As a serious examination of the sources and history of Mercia this is a standout book. However, for someone newly interested in the history of Anglo-Saxon England and wanting to find out more about Mercia, the book bypasses the temptation to paint more flesh onto characters than the sources can bear, leaving its treatment of them somewhat distant and uninvolved.

*Left: Offa ruled from 757-796 and was one of the most powerful Mercian kings*

# RAF BOMBER COMMAND OPERATIONS MANUAL

AN IN-DEPTH AND HIGHLY READABLE ACCOUNT OF BOMBER COMMAND

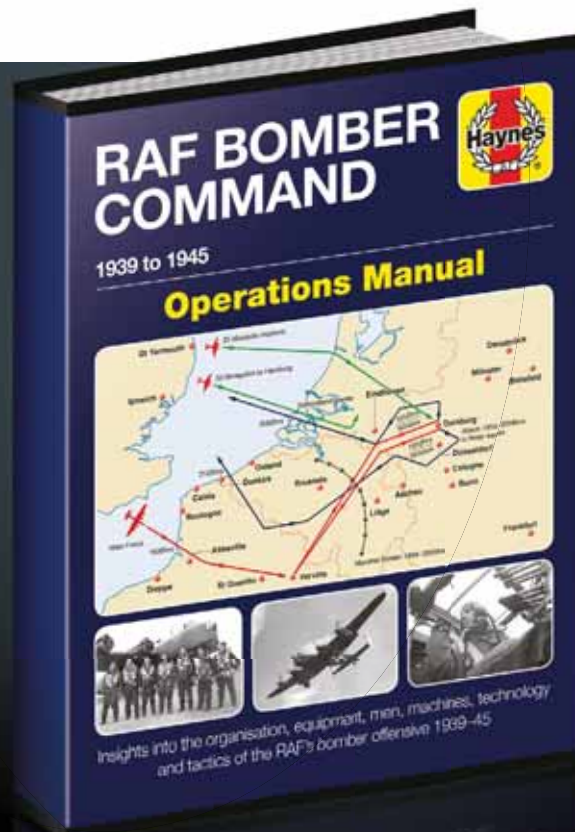
**Author:** Jonathan Falconer **Publisher:** Haynes **Price:** £25.00

Jonathan Falconer established his reputation as an expert in military aviation with his books on the Dambusters and a previous work on Bomber Command. He has now produced a more detailed and highly readable account of Bomber Command, covering every aspect of the force that played such a determining role in Germany's defeat in World War II.

"Strategic bombing was the major innovation of the Second World War," the author explains, "wielded by the Allies to break the will of the German people and hasten the collapse of their war economy". The book gives a detailed account of how this task was achieved, from the conception of Bomber Command in 1936, taking the reader step by step through the construction of airfields, the aircrew that flew the missions, the fleet that developed and produced the iconic Lancaster heavy

bomber, the weaponry, the planning and execution of raids, along with an assessment of the effectiveness of these costly operations. There is also an in-depth analysis of the German air defence network that the pilots of Bomber Command needed to penetrate to strike at the heart of the Reich.

By 1943, Bomber Command could boast a heavy-duty force, flown by highly trained crews and using the latest advances in radar technology that enabled them to drop their bombs squarely on target. The six-year bomber offensive cost the lives of 55,000 airmen and the destruction of more than 8,000 aircraft. As the author concludes, "Whether it hastened the end of the war in Europe remains a hotly-debated issue, but the bravery of the men who flew by day and night with Bomber Command is an undisputed fact."



**"STRATEGIC BOMBING WAS THE MAJOR INNOVATION OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR"**

# THE INDIAN EMPIRE AT WAR

"FROM JIHAD TO VICTORY", THIS NEW HISTORY OF INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO WWI SHEDS LIGHT ON OFTEN-FORGOTTEN SACRIFICE AND HEROISM

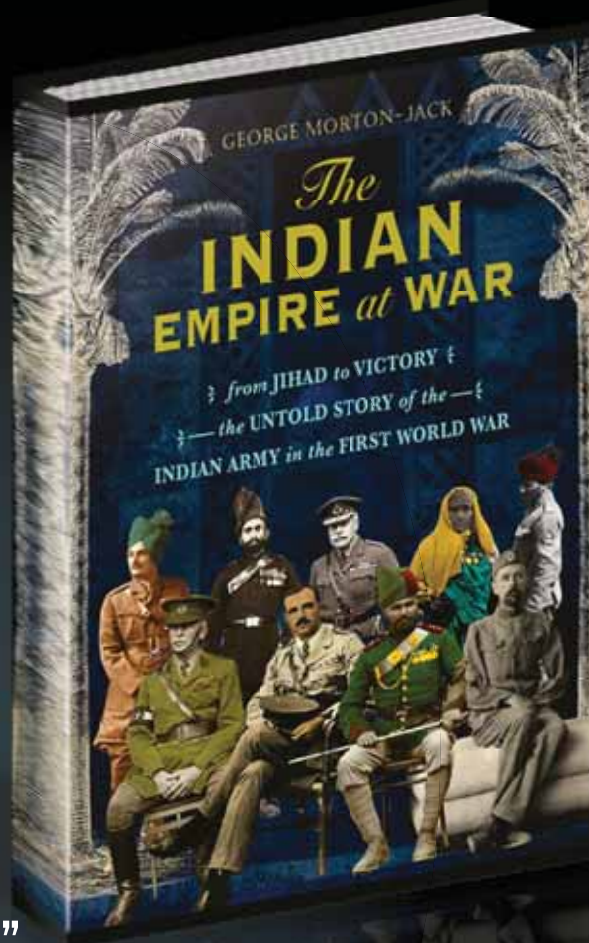
**Author:** George Morton-Jack **Publisher:** Little, Brown **Price:** £25.00

The considerable contribution made by India to the British war effort during both world wars has sadly been neglected by historians. Thankfully, in recent years a number of new studies have attempted to address this glaring gap in the current literature, some of which have proved fascinating regarding our 'forgotten heroes'. However, historian George Morton-Jack has produced what can fairly be described as one of the most interesting and informative works yet published on the Indian Army during World War I.

Basing his research on material from archives across a dozen countries and previously unpublished veteran interviews, the author sets the scene by examining the hugely multicultural Indian Army as it was just prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. Here Morton-Jack

dispels some of the myths that have endured over the past 100 years and offers some facts that even many military historians of the period may be unaware of. Interestingly, he describes how the Indian Army was celebrated as loyal heroes of the British Empire from 1919 to the 1930s, thus not always being as forgotten as we think today.

The majority of the book, of course, focuses on the Indian Army during World War I, and in particular the Middle East, where it fought against the Ottoman Empire. Morton-Jack's use of little-known accounts from Indian Army veterans, however, is what really brings the book to life, offering the reader a rare and unique glimpse into the personal ordeals, hopes and even joys experienced by the Indian soldier at war.



**"ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING & INFORMATIVE WORKS YET PUBLISHED ON THE INDIAN ARMY DURING WORLD WAR I"**

# VIETNAM

## AN EPIC TRAGEDY

MAX HASTINGS TURNS HIS METICULOUS ANALYSIS ON 30 YEARS OF A CONFLICT THAT CHANGED AND DEFINED THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

**Author:** Max Hastings **Publisher:** William Collins **Price:** £30.00

As a piece of fiction, it would have been dismissed as an unworkable fantasy. 30 years of battlefield conflict, the longest war of the 20th century, sees two major, industrialised nuclear powers brought to their knees by guerrilla fighters in a Southeast Asian country the size of California.

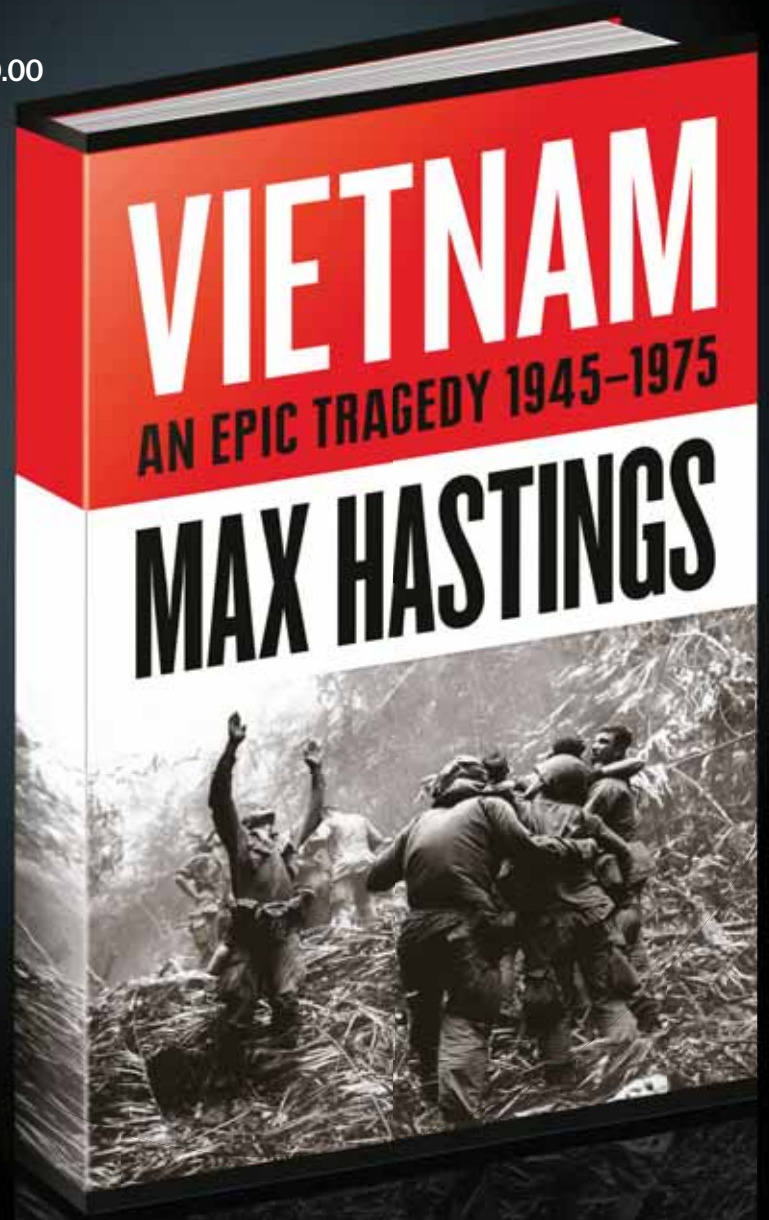
Yet it happened, and Max Hastings narrates the 1945-1975 French and US intervention in Vietnam in a book that is likely to stand as the definitive chronicle of this event, which cost the lives of 3 million people on all sides. The author has researched archival material and a wealth of secondary sources, and he also draws from his own experiences as a reporter in the US during the war and an evacuee taken by helicopter out of the US Embassy compound in Saigon during the US withdrawal in 1975.

Hastings depicts the war as an unprecedented tragedy for the Vietnamese people. At the same time, he highlights the fact – uncomfortable perhaps for some – that this was not simply an episode of French and US imperialist bullying. The author brings to light the many atrocities committed by the communist regime of the North, which more than matched those of their enemies south of the 17th parallel.

The US military debacle was an all-but-inevitable outcome of Washington, DC's ongoing policy blunders. As Hastings makes clear, the US commitment was fatally flawed by its foundation not upon the interests of the Vietnamese people, but instead on the perceived requirements of US domestic and foreign policy – containment of China foremost among them.



*Squad Leader Richard Champion barks orders after receiving sniper fire. The massive US commitment in Vietnam was a debacle*



**“THIS WAS NOT SIMPLY AN EPISODE OF FRENCH AND US IMPERIALIST BULLYING”**

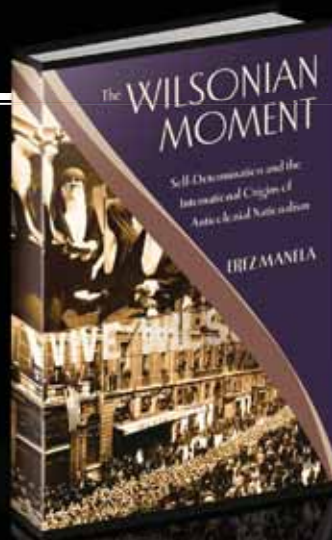
5 BEST BOOKS ON

# INTER-WAR CONFLICT

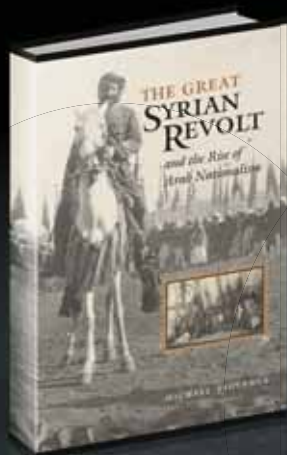
WWI DID NOT END IN 1918, AND NEITHER SHOULD YOUR LIBRARY. HERE ARE SOME GREAT BOOKS TO HELP ROUND OUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THIS LITTLE-COVERED PERIOD

**The Wilsonian Moment:  
Self-Determination And  
The International Origins Of  
Anticolonial Nationalism**  
*Erez Manela*

This book is controversial, but for good reasons. Manela looks at reactions to the end of World War I, and to Woodrow Wilson's statement on national self-determination. He looks at a series of different people across the world, from Egypt to China, to show how they interpreted Wilson's Fourteen Points and what it meant for the development of nationalism around the world.

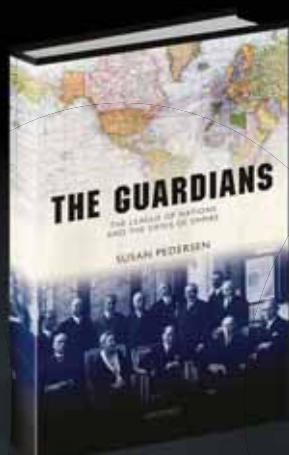


**“THIS BOOK IS CONTROVERSIAL, BUT FOR GOOD REASONS”**



**The Great Syrian Revolt  
And The Rise Of Arab  
Nationalism**  
*Michael Provence*

Michael Provence's magnum opus on the Great Syrian Revolt can hardly be topped. It covers a vast swathe of political and military history in one of the most important turning points of Arab and Middle Eastern modern history. Well-written, detailed and authoritative, it is well worth considering, even if it might be a bit heavy for holiday reading.



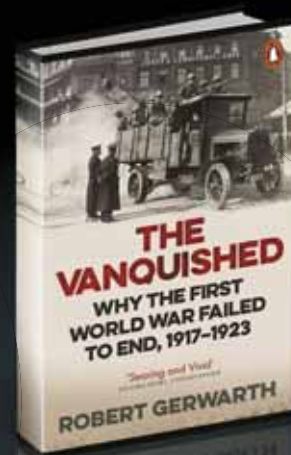
**The Guardians: The  
League Of Nations And  
The Crisis Of Empire**  
*Susan Pederson*

Susan Pederson's 2015 book was an important step in our better understanding of the mandate system, how it came to be, and the vast political wrangling that took place around the controversial idea. Pederson gives her readers a look into 'how the sausage was made' at the highest levels.



**The Fall Of The Ottomans:  
The Great War And The  
Middle East, 1914 - 1920**  
*Eugene Rogan*

Eugene Rogan has written the authoritative account of the history of the Middle East during and after World War I. Rogan's book seamlessly blends together dozens of important strands to weave a tapestry that helps the reader understand the vast complexities and multiplicities of the Great War, and its impact on this critical region.



**The Vanquished: Why The  
First World War Failed To  
End, 1917 - 1923**  
*Robert Gerwarth*

The subject of seemingly endless praise in international press when it came out in 2016, Robert Gerwarth's book distils the grand, global narratives of the post-war period into a single book that helps readers quickly compare the many parallel struggles going on simultaneously around the world. An important book for understanding the sheer scope of it all.

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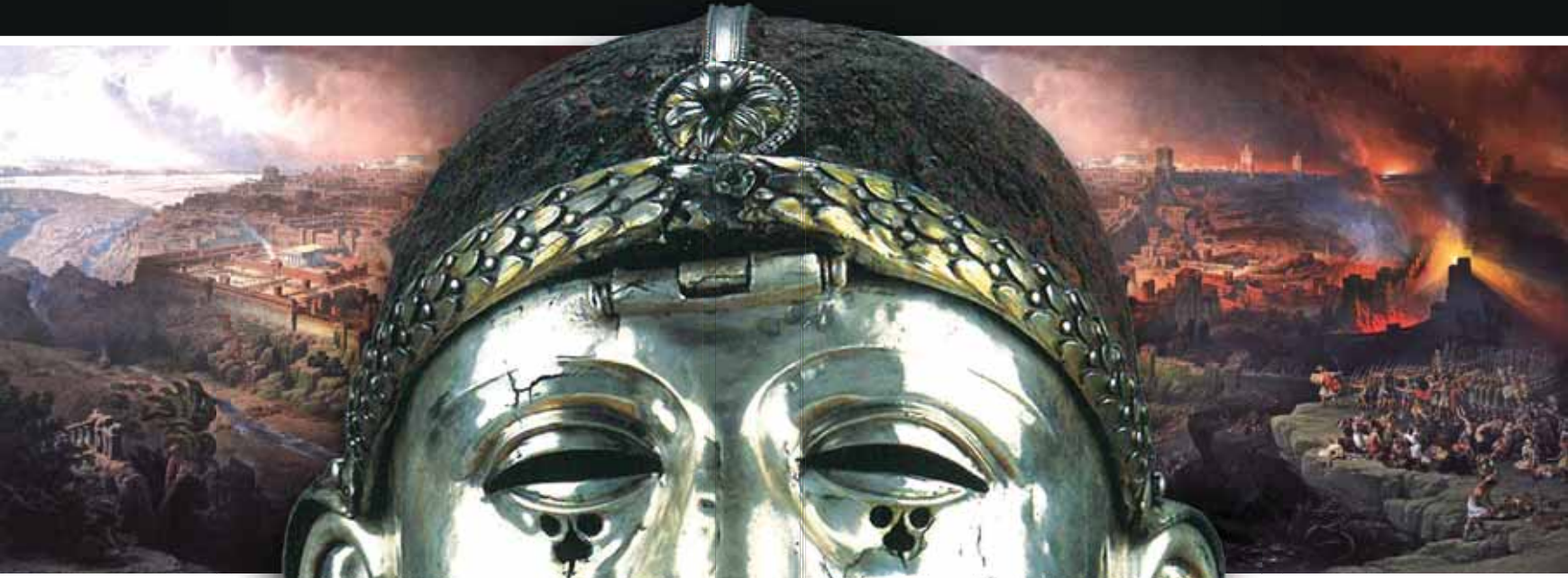
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# EMESA HELMET

This eerie cavalry headpiece is a fascinating but enigmatic insight into military culture in Roman Syria



*Right: The exceptional quality of the work on the helmet indicates that it was probably made in Antioch, which was then famous for its metalwork*

*Above: Soldiers from Emesa were regularly sent to assist Roman armies, including during the Siege of Jerusalem in 70CE, which led to the city being captured and sacked*

**“THE HELMET IS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR CAVALRY USE WITH NARROW EYE SLITS AND DOWNWARD-FACING HOLES”**

**R**oman influence in Syria began in 64 BCE, and the province was eventually garrisoned with three legions and auxiliary units. In common with other parts of the empire, many local rulers became Romanised, including the Emesani dynasty of priest-kings at Emesa, which is now modern-day Homs. Emesa had a long history of imperial cooperation and its soldiers had assisted Julius Caesar at the Siege of Alexandria in 41 BCE and also fought alongside Roman forces at the Siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

Some sense of Emesani wealth can be seen in this distinctive cavalry helmet, which was discovered in 1936. Known as the ‘Emesa Helmet’, the headpiece is predominantly made of iron but with a silver face mask and other ornaments. Dated to the early 1st century CE, it was primarily designed for combat rather than parades or ceremonies. The helmet’s owner was likely a distinguished person, and some historians have speculated that he was an associate or member of the Emesani dynasty.

The helmet is specifically designed for cavalry use, with narrow eye slits and downward-facing

holes. These holes may have been hastily made out of necessity for either battle or tournaments. It is probable that the helmet was made for a Syrian general in a Roman style, and its high quality indicates another detail. The face mask’s prominent nose, low cheekbones and thick lower lip indicate that it was perhaps intended to reproduce certain individual features of the owner’s face. This would make the Emesa Helmet one of the most unique military portraits in antiquity and a striking symbol of the owner’s supposed fighting prowess.



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